











# Whose Revolution?



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*A STUDY OF THE FUTURE COURSE OF  
LIBERALISM IN THE UNITED STATES*

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## Introduction

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THE moral disintegration of our present day of wars and totalitarian savagery is not entirely the product of the diseased minds of the Hitlers, Stalins and Mussolinis. It is also, in a measure, the result of our intellectual unpreparedness to cope with the new problems of a changing world. It constitutes a severe indictment of our inept intellectual leadership.

"Nothing is more characteristic of the intellectuals of our generation," says Archibald MacLeish, "than their failure to understand what it is that is happening to their world. And nothing explains that failure as precisely as their unwillingness to see what they have seen and to know what they do truly know." \*

In a word, they know everything but understand nothing. Ensconced in their intellectual air-raid shelters, they refuse to admit to themselves that their world is tumbling about them. Nor is this true only of the American prototype. The European intellectual, too, was largely unconcerned by the march of totalitarianism

\* "The Irresponsibles" by Archibald MacLeish. Duell, Sloan and Pearce. New York.

until it bombed his very own ivory tower. Concentration camps are filled with perplexed scholars and artists who are still unaware of "how it all happened." It is noteworthy that the ignorant peasantry of Yugoslavia rose up in arms to defend its liberties while the Parisian sophisticates capitulated.

Obviously, the shape of things to come—the nascent social order—will not be designed by these futilitarian intellectuals. But what about the socially-minded intellectuals, the thinking minority, the liberals?

It has become the fashion in many intellectual circles to regard liberalism as dead or dying. The liberals, they say, are on the defensive. They have lost ground to the dictators who are conquering the world with their iron wills.

All this may be true of liberalism as a party label—official liberalism—but as a social philosophy, a way of life, liberalism is facing its greatest opportunities. The tragic experiences under authoritarian rule have enhanced the importance of individual rights. These rights ceased to be abstractions to people deprived of them. Dictatorships have taught them the bitter lesson that the sacrifice of democracy for economic security is the sacrifice of democracy *and* economic security.

Many of those who grew impatient with the inadequacies of liberalism and embraced totalitarian ideologies have since learned better. They discovered the old truth that the end does not justify the means but that the means determine the end. They realized that freedom is indivisible; and no one is free until all are free. They learned the danger inherent in the concentration of both



economic and political power in one group. As a result, there is an unmistakable resurgence of the liberal spirit in the world—in embattled Britain, in enslaved Europe, in turbulent America—a renewed dedication to the liberal way of life. It is to the liberals that people everywhere are turning in this crisis for leadership and guidance.

Can the liberals measure up to the tasks that confront them? To be sure, the history of modern liberalism has been marked by indecision, dissension and lack of a positive program for social organization. There is considerable confusion in the public mind about the very connotation of liberalism. Thus we have the hyphenated brands of Liberal-Republicans, Liberal-Democrats and even Liberal-Communists.

Yet, liberalism is a definite social philosophy. In its broad sense, it represents a way of life which stresses the importance and rights of the individual in society. It regards as the ideal form of society that in which individualism is developed in a manner best suited to make its contribution to social heritage.

The enduring values for which earlier liberalism stood are, according to John Dewey, "liberty; the development of the inherent capacities of individuals made possible through liberty; and the central role of free intelligence in inquiry, discussion and expression." \*

Early liberalism had done its work, however poorly or well. Modern liberalism, to survive the crisis and to become a dynamic force again, must readjust itself to

\* "Liberalism and Social Action" by John Dewey. G. P. Putnam's Sons. New York.

the exigencies of the present-day world. If it is to lead us out of chaos, if it is to profit by its past mistakes, liberalism must take stock of itself, put its own house in order, coalesce its forces and—what is most important—evolve a positive program for social action.

The insistent question is, how are these tasks to be accomplished?

Certainly, before we can arrive at a constructive program to meet the problems of a new era, we must admit the shortcomings of modern liberalism; study the revisions of Marxian theory imposed by the rise of fascism and the failure of Communist Russia; understand the nature of the fascist revolution and its relation to the decline of capitalism; study the role of the new technical-managerial class. We must also evaluate the importance of religion, civil liberties, private property.

To help this understanding, the present volume was designed. No two contributors probably agree on all points. All concur, however, in the need of a positive program for liberalism and in the belief that totalitarianism is neither desirable nor inevitable.

We are at the end of an era. *Whose* revolution will triumph? In the following pages, several outstanding social thinkers—writers who have influenced the molding of progressive opinion in America in the past two decades—revaluate liberalism and democracy in a changing world.

I. D. W. TALMADGE

**PART 1**

**THE CRISIS IN LIBERALISM**



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## Two Revolutions

*BY HANS KOHN*

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### I

THE present war has been rightly regarded as a decisive battle between a totalitarian form of government and the liberal way of life which has developed through the intellectual and social revolutions of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. Such a struggle is nothing new—the last two hundred years were full of it. What distinguishes this crisis from all the preceding ones is, on the one hand, its universal scope, and on the other hand, its decisive character.

In the second quarter of the twentieth century all movements gain a new and universal character as a result of the tremendous changes in locomotion and communication. The struggle between democracy and reaction in Europe one hundred years ago was strictly limited to that continent; today the same struggle draws all continents into its orbit. Totalitarianism claims universality and universal application by its own definition whether it be the totalitarianism of a religion or the totalitarianism of a political philosophy like communism

or fascism. Unless stopped, their dynamism necessarily drives them towards a realization on a world-wide scale. The present world-wide conflict between totalitarianism and democracy is of a decisive nature because the countries involved are not selected by historical accident or by secondary considerations. The countries involved are potentially strong enough to wage the struggle decisively for the whole world, and they are the very nations that have developed in their cultural and social traditions the prototype of the totalitarian and of the democratic ways of life.

Though all totalitarianism claims universality, only the German form of totalitarianism has the power to make good its claim. Russian, Italian, Spanish or Japanese totalitarianism, though they certainly dream of universal expansion, lack the factual resources to support this claim. Russian communism is not a danger to democracy, not because it doesn't wish to be a danger, but because Russian inefficiency, the backwardness of the country, and of its industrial equipment, deprive it of the possibility of any world-wide aggressive plans. It is under these circumstances that not communism but the fear of communism represents a distinct threat to the survival of democracy. Nor is the Italian fascism a real danger to democracy on a world-wide scale. Italian fascism, after eighteen years of preparation, broke down under the very minor strain of the wars against Greece and Egypt. All these secondary totalitarianisms draw their universal importance from Germany's support, and depend upon it. Only Germany, through its unique military tradition, the high efficiency of its industrial

equipment, and the discipline and intelligence of its population, can make good the totalitarian claim to universality.

Of all the democracies, the United States is, as a result of its geographic position, of its numerous population, of its large resources and of its supreme industrial equipment, the only power to match Germany. Thus the struggle of totalitarianism against democracy reduces itself ultimately to one between Germany and the United States. There is no doubt that the Germans know it. It does not matter, for the existence of the struggle, whether the Americans know it or will it. The less they know it the greater are Germany's chances of victory.

But it is not only a question of power which reduces the conflict ultimately to one between Germany and the United States. In the years after the first World War the world has grown so much into a unit, the earth has been shrinking so much in its width, that an organized world becomes more and more a necessity. The leadership in this organization can be exercised only by Berlin or Washington. Compared with them, Moscow, London, and Tokyo, not to speak of Rome or Paris or Madrid, are secondary centers of power. German totalitarianism and American democracy represent, in the most accomplished form, the totalitarian and the democratic trends.

The American Revolution at the end of the eighteenth century and the German Revolution of the second third of the twentieth century form the most definite expressions of two opposite and irreconcilable trends of political, social, and intellectual development. All the great

currents of the Western liberal development of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries came to full fruition under the especially favorable circumstances of the English colonies in North America and their revolutionary movement. Here, more than anywhere else, emerged the Western man, not as a race, because he was a mixture of all races, but as a social and intellectual type, carrying deep faith in man and his potentialities, building a civilization on the basis of rationalism, optimism and individualism. The American society more than any other is a product of the eighteenth century, of the faith in freedom and in ultimate harmony, a typical middle-class society with its ultimately pacifist ideal. German totalitarianism which has its roots deep in the past of German development since the Renaissance and the Reformation, is a complete and uncompromising rejection of the Western man and his society, of the optimism, rationalism, and individualism of the eighteenth century.

## II

The end of the eighteenth century marked a sharper dividing line between two stages of human development than any other short span in history. Its incomparable strength was founded on its universal message, on the promise to establish a new order in which all men and all people would participate equally,—a new era which would assure liberty and justice for all and bring forth hidden and unused well springs of a higher morality to build the city of man in the whole world. True, in the cross currents of historical realization these generous



impulses were soon necessarily and inextricably intertwined with all kinds of old and recent vested interests, of traditional and of untried emotions, of desires and appetites aroused by unprecedented opportunities, and of fears and anxieties born of the insecurity of changing times and unknown destinies, but the main trend was unmistakable. It aroused new hopes and new joys of being human in the hearts of the peoples throughout Western Europe, and spread from there at the beginning of the nineteenth century to the countries of Central and Southern Europe. But Europeans of that time themselves knew that the European soil was not the right nursery for the growth of the new order: the forces of the past were too strongly entrenched. More propitious seemed the soil where men lived near the healing forces of Nature in whose fundamental goodness the eighteenth century so strongly believed, where conditions were relatively simple, and where few of the vested interests and corruptions of an aristocratic civilization hindered the growth of the spontaneous goodness of man. No wonder that Europeans looked longingly to the vast spaces of North America where they found the possibility of establishing a society without kings or nobles, a society founded upon the philosophy of the century. Though the Americans had come from Europe, they seemed to be changed men, as if the air of America were filled with liberty and were able to transform men's minds and hearts. The new order of rational enlightenment and of the equality of all individuals seemed to have better chances in a new land than in the old countries where the foundations of the past order, based

on authoritarianism, superstition, and inequality, survived.

In this new world all the liberal influences of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries seemed gathered under unique circumstances. From England came the English tradition of constitutional liberty and common law, helped by the young and experimental character of the settlements so remote from European society. The impulse of the Puritan Revolution remained much more alive in New England than in the mother country where the Restoration had infinitely greater influence. Efforts at establishing religious and class forms of domination did not prevail; new waves of immigrants, coming mostly from the lower classes and bringing various religious affiliations with them, prevented the rigid stabilization of such a domination for any protracted period. It is interesting to note that those Puritans who returned in the middle of the seventeenth century from the colonies to England carried back with them a resolute optimism for social betterment and supported the left wing of the Puritan revolution. One of them, Hugh Peters, said in a sermon preached to Parliament in England on April 2, 1645: "I have lived in a Countrey, where seven years I never saw beggar nor heard an oath nor looked upon a drunkard; why should there be beggars in *your* Israel where there is so much work to do?" \*

The early settlers of New England were sharply divided in the interpretation of the "holy experiments in government"; the one school under men like Cotton

\* Don M. Wolfe, *Milton in the Puritan Revolution*. (New York, 1941) page 36.

tended toward institutional theocracy, the other under men like Hooker and Williams tended toward prophetic religion. Both, however, regarded the settlements as a new beginning, with immense potentialities for the improvement of the race. By the beginning of the eighteenth century this feeling had crystallized into the conviction that the New World settlements represented the most perfect fruit and at the same time the noblest possibilities of English development. As Jonathan Edwards put it, Providence intended America to be "the glorious renovator of the world"; and John Wise, Pastor of Ipswich, Massachusetts, maintained in 1717 that "the end of all good government is to cultivate humanity, and promote the happiness of all, and the good of every man in all his rights, his life, liberty, estate, honor, etc., without injury or abuse to any." \*

The American Revolution was not foreshadowed by any state of oppression or of misery, by any feeling of bitter disloyalty or despair. On the contrary, the colonists were the least oppressed of all people on earth. Not only were they infinitely freer than all people on the European continent, they were even freer than Englishmen in Great Britain. The American colonists revolted not because they were oppressed but because they were free, and their freedom carried the promise of still greater freedom, one unrealizable in the more settled and static conditions of old society, but beckoning as a possibility in the new continent. Mother country and the colony grew from the same roots: the Magna Carta and com-

\* John Wise, *A Vindication of the Government of New England Churches*. (Boston, 1860) page 40.

mon law, Parliamentary institutions and local self-government, the Puritan and the Glorious Revolutions, Milton and Locke. The American Revolution was a consummation of English liberalism. The demands of the colonists found as warm defenders in Great Britain as at home, not only among "radicals" but also amongst the highest dignitaries of the Crown and Law, like Charles Pratt, Earl of Camden, who called the British Constitution one "whose foundation and center is liberty, which sends liberty to every subject" within "its ample circumference."

But the American Revolution was not only the consummation and fruition of the English revolutions of the seventeenth century,—it was the product and the consummation of the new natural-right doctrine of the eighteenth century and of the French political thinkers with their new emphasis on the interpretation of liberty, not as a historical and constitutional right but as a rational and universal attribute. "I always consider the settlement of America with reverence and wonder," John Adams wrote in 1765, "as the opening of a grand scene and design in Providence for the illumination of the ignorant, and the emancipation of the slavish part of mankind all over the earth." \*

It is noteworthy that the "philosophy" of the American Revolution was not supplied by one of the colonists but by an Englishman who had landed only a few months before in America. Thomas Paine's "Common Sense" was written by a citizen of the world who saw in the American Revolution a struggle for the birth of a new

\* *Works of John Adams*, 10 vols. (Boston, 1856) Vol. 1, page 66.

freedom on universal principles. It was the "religion of humanity" which vibrated in every page of the clarion call to independence and which helped the American Whigs to gain a new consciousness of their actions and aims. Through this interpretation the American Revolution formed a vanguard of mankind building a society on entirely new foundations, that of the human rights of the eighteenth century. In the Declaration of Independence eighteenth-century political theory found its first application in the world of reality.

By the end of the Revolution the American colonies had emancipated themselves from the past so completely that they did not regard common descent or a common root in the past as a foundation of their community. In 1784 Benjamin Franklin, in his "Information to Those Who Would Remove to America," stressed the fact that "birth in Europe has indeed its value; but it is a commodity that cannot be carried to a worse market than that of America, where people do not inquire concerning a stranger, What is he? but What can he do?" \* He stressed the mutual tolerance and peaceful cooperation of many sects and creeds in America; but this diversity and tolerance in religion, unheard-of in that period, was matched by the diversity and tolerance of the racial strains in the colonies. As far back as 1782 a keen observer like Crèvecoeur could point out the emergence of a new man in the United States and the astonishing variety of the racial elements mingling in the melting pot: "He is an American who, leaving behind him all

\* *The Works of Benjamin Franklin*, 10 vols. (Boston, 1840) Vol. 2, page 469.

his ancient prejudices and manners, wrests new ones from the new mode of life he has embraced, the new government he obeys, and the new rank he holds. He becomes an American by being received in the broad lap of our great alma mater. Here individuals of all nations are melted in a new race of man, whose labors and posterity will one day cause great changes in the world." \* Here a nation emerged founded on general and rational principles, not looking to the past but entirely constituted by consciousness of a common present and a common future. "The Gothic idea that we will look backwards instead of forwards for the improvement of the human mind, and to recur to the annals of our ancestors for what is most perfect in government, in religion and in learning, is worthy of those bigots in religion and government by whom it has been recommended, and whose purposes it would answer. But it is not an idea which this country will endure," Thomas Jefferson wrote to Doctor Priestley in 1800. And in even more succinct form, he summed it up when he wrote in 1816, "I like the dreams of the future better than the history of the past." †

### III

The American nation which arose in the American Revolution was not bound together by ties of blood or of the past. Nor was it a nation rooted in the soil, as the

\* *Letters from an American Farmer*, by J. Hector St. John. (Philadelphia, 1793) page 46 f.

† *The Writings of Thomas Jefferson*, 9 vols. (Washington, 1853-54) Vol. 4, page 318; Vol. 7, page 27.

European nations were. American nationalism has been primarily the embodiment of an idea which though geographically and historically located in the United States was a universal idea, the most vital and enduring legacy of the eighteenth century. An example had been set to mankind, not only in the republican form of government but also in its federative character, which combined far-reaching independence of historical separate communities with existence of a strong central authority for common concerns. The Constitution and the Bill of Rights have remained the unshakable foundation of the new nation. They have drawn their strength not from their legal character but from the ideas which they express. In spite of their imperfections they have withstood the test of time better than any other constitution on earth, for during the past one hundred and fifty years all other nations everywhere have changed their constitutions repeatedly. The American constitutional laws have lasted because the idea for which they stand was so intimately welded with the existence of the American nation that without the idea there would have been no American nation.

Among the realities of national life the image which a nation forms of itself and in which it mirrors itself is one of the most important. Though the every-day reality, in many ways, does not correspond to the image and falls far short of its ideal perfection and often contradicts it in the countless and conflicting trends of the complex actuality, nevertheless, this image, woven of elements of reality, tradition, imagination, and aspiration, is one of the most formative agents in national

character. It helps to mold national life; if it does not always act in a positive direction, it acts at least as a constant brake. "It is," Thomas Jefferson wrote to Joseph Priestley, "that though written constitutions may be violated in moments of passion or delusion, yet they furnish a text to which those who are watchful may again rally and recall the people; they fix, too, for the people the principles of their political creed." \* Nations, not rooted for many centuries in a circumscribed soil, or nourished by the belief in common descent, live even more by the force of the national idea. The territory of the United States was not circumscribed; in spite of Noah Webster's efforts, the country never developed even a language of its own; Negroes, Jews, German Lutherans, and Latin Catholics participated in the Revolutionary War and fought for the nascent American nation; it was the national idea which alone could serve as a foundation.

It is interesting to note that the image which Europeans formed about the new American nation at the end of the eighteenth century was not different from the Americans' idea of themselves. America appeared as a symbol of liberty and "natural" virtue, a land in whose vast open spaces the natural order could become creative, unhampered by the traditions and superstitions of past ages. This interpretation abroad reacted upon Americans' own conception, the more so because it gladly conceded the leadership of America on humanity's road to the future. For the first time a nation had arisen on

\* *The Writings of Thomas Jefferson*, 20 vols. (Washington, 1903) Vol. 10, page 325.



the basis of these truths held "to be self-evident, that all men were endowed by their creator with certain inalienable rights, that among those are life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness,"—truths which the nation could not give up without destroying its own foundation. Through all the many public sermons, articles and poems, with their empty bombast and rhetorical unctuousity and their tribute paid to the tastes of the times, through all the political struggles and economic maneuvers of petty men and greedy leaders, the American ideal lived, disfigured and sometimes obliterated and yet struggling for its realization.

The new nation, born in the American Revolution, was based upon the faith of being different from other nations, different not in representing a peculiar and unique development of human history but in being the first to realize a general trend of human development towards a more rational order, more individual liberty and greater equality. American nationalism is thus not a movement of romantic protest against the equalitarian and rational attitude of eighteenth-century Western Europe, as German and Russian nationalism have been in many of their leading representatives, but is the very consummation of this Western attitude. It is not a voice crying out of the depths of the dark past but proudly a product of the enlightened present setting its face resolutely toward the future. Noah Webster praised the American system of civil government because it had been "framed in the most enlightened period of the world. All other systems of civil polity have been begun in the rude times of ignorance and savage ferocity;

fabricated at the voice of necessity, without science and without experience. America, just beginning to exist in an advanced period of human improvement, has the science and experience of all nations to direct her in forming a plan of government.” \*

America had realized what the leading thinkers of the French and English Enlightenment had outlined as the future of humanity; she came to regard herself as the trustee of the universal blessings of liberty and equality for Europe and for mankind. Soon the French Revolution seemed to follow in the wake of the American Revolution; even one of the proudest creations of 1793, universal military service in the citizens' army, had been foreshadowed by the patriot armies of the American Revolution. The French Revolution in its turn acted upon the American public mind and a new wave of democratic enthusiasm swept America in the 'nineties. Though it had received its new strength and its public appeal from the French Revolution, nevertheless, it sprang from the very foundations of the American Revolution. The French Revolution had acted everywhere in Europe as an agency vitalizing the peoples to liberty; but in the United States the resurgence of ardor and faith in liberty, equality, and fraternity was not a passing phenomenon quickly to be submerged by the victorious counter revolution. While in Europe despotism seemed to triumph, while even in France the new liberties waned, in the United States the second revolution strengthened the existing foundations of Americanism and made them impregnable.

\* Noah Webster, *Sketches of American Policy*, ed. by Harry R. Warfel. (New York, 1937) Page 23.

A fervent friend of the French Revolution, Joel Barlow, could proudly establish the unique position of the United States. "In the United States of America the science of liberty is universally understood, felt, and practiced, as much by the simple as by the wise, the weak and the strong. Their deep-rooted and inveterate habit of thinking is, that all men are equal in their rights, that it is impossible to make them otherwise; and this being their undisturbed belief, they have no conception how any man in his senses can entertain any other. This point once settled, everything is settled. Many operations, which in Europe have been considered incredible tales or dangerous experiments, are but the infallible consequences of this great principle." \* The fight against oppression and inequality, for individual liberty and social justice, the faith in the common man and his perfectibility—this common task and duty of mankind seemed to Jefferson and to his contemporaries more realizable in America than anywhere else. It was this faith of the American people in itself and in its mission which made it a nation. The American form of government was "a standing monument and example for the aim and imitation of the people of other countries." †

This multi-racial nation whose farming population was rooted in the mobility of the frontier instead of in the immobility of the soil was integrated around allegiance to the American idea, an idea to which every one could be assimilated for the very reason that it was a universal idea. It was a nationalism without any

\* *The Political Writings of Joel Barlow*. (New York, 1796) page 142.

† *The Writings of Thomas Jefferson*, 10 vols. (New York, 1892-99) Vol. 8, page 8.

exclusiveness. Jefferson wished to keep the doors of America wide open, "to consecrate a sanctuary for those whom the misrule of Europe may compel to seek happiness in other climes. This refuge once known will produce reaction on the happiness even of those who remain there, by warning their task-masters that when the evils of Egyptian oppression become heavier than those of the abandonment of country, another Canaan is open where their subjects will be received as brothers, and secured against like oppressions by a participation in the right of self-government." The shore of the new world had been a land of promise for the early settlers; it would be so for all new comers as long as need existed. And finally the need would cease: all other countries would accept the blessings of liberty and equality for which the American form of government stood. Ten days before he died, in the last letter which is preserved, Jefferson reiterated his faith in the American mission which had animated him when he had written the Declaration of Independence, half a century before. "May it be to the world what I believe it will be, (to some parts sooner, to others later, but finally to all), the signal of arousing men to burst the chains under which monkish ignorance and superstition had persuaded them to bind themselves, and to assume the blessings and security of self-government." \* The same inclusive and liberal idea even molded American imperialism. In "A Poem on the Happiness of America," which David Humphreys had addressed to the patriot armies

\* *The Writings of Thomas Jefferson*, 9 vols. (Washington, 1853-54) Vol. 7, page 450.

of the Revolution, he had contrasted past empires built upon conquest with the new rising empire erected on "freedom's base" and dedicated to "humanity's extended cause." Throughout its following history the original attitude of American nationalism lived on as one of the determining forces of the young nation's destiny. Its manifest destiny may have demanded the annexation of Canada or Cuba so often clamored for in the nineteenth century, but beneath the apparent surface deep restraining impulses were active. "The American expansionists' nationalism was so little exclusive that it offered refuge to all the devotees of freedom in a world elsewhere threatened with a rising deluge of despotism." \* All new lands were open to every one on equal terms under the protection of that fundamental recognition of the "great and equal rights of human nature" which was a foundation of American nationalism as the legacy of the eighteenth century. America's expansion was also an expansion of democracy. America has visualized her own national birth as a step in the struggle for the liberty of the individual and the happiness of the whole human race; though she might allow the consciousness of herself—and her conscience—to become blacked out in certain parts or at certain times, nevertheless she could not give it up entirely without undermining the foundations of her existence.

The American nation has not been determined by the "natural" factors of blood and soil, nor by the common memories of a long history. Traditions of the past and regard for ancient events have always tended

\* Albert K. Weinberg, *Manifest Destiny*. (Baltimore, 1935) page 124.

to separate nations; the dead weight of memories of long ago has frustrated efforts at a rational new beginning. Americans could unite men of different pasts because, on the basis of rationalism and individualism, they rejected the ties of the past. "Happily, for America, happily, I trust for the whole human race they pursued a new and more noble course. They accomplished a revolution which has no parallel in the annals of human society. They reared the fabrics of governments which have no model on the face of the globe." Thus wrote James Madison,\* knowing that though the American form of government was unprecedented and at that time unique it had its roots in the rational thought of mankind and would, therefore, influence and be imitated by other people. A new chapter of world history had started with the American Revolution and its influence spread not only to Europe but also to the then still undiscovered lands of the Far East.

#### IV

The American Revolution created the American nation. The German Revolution of 1933 did not create the German nation. Though it is impossible to think of Americanism outside the eighteenth-century foundations of liberty and equality, it is not only possible but entirely legitimate to think of a Germanism outside, and even opposed to, the forms of life produced by the Revolution of 1933. The German Revolution of 1933 has been a profound and far-reaching revolution transforming and remolding the entire political, social, and

\* *The Federalist*, ed. by Henry Cabot Lodge. (New York, 1908) page 81.

intellectual order. It was a radical revolution going deeply into the roots of all human relations and ways of life and trying to reform them in an entirely different spirit, with their roots implanted in an entirely different soil. That does not mean that the German Revolution represents, as the revolutions of the last three centuries did, progress on the road towards more human liberty and equality. The German Revolution does not establish a new order, but reestablishes and strengthens the foundations of the old order, the only order which it recognizes as order,—the order of authority and inequality. But it is no longer so to speak the naïve old order which existed before the three revolutionary centuries. Nor can it be compared to the conservative reaction of the nineteenth century which kept itself on the defensive and fighting a rear-guard action. It is an infinitely more conscious and more aggressive revival of authoritarianism and inequality than the old order has ever known.

The German Revolution goes even beyond the old order in its revival of primitive warrior spirit. The eighteenth and the nineteenth centuries, the bourgeois centuries as they are contemptuously called by the adherents of the “new order,” cherished the faith in a coming period of lasting peace. It was expressed by Washington when he wrote to Lafayette in 1786, “As the member of an infant empire, as a philanthropist by character, and, (if I may be allowed the expression) as a citizen of the great republic of humanity at large, I cannot help turning my attention sometimes to this subject. I would be understood to mean, I cannot avoid

reflecting with pleasure on the probable influence, that commerce may hereafter have on human manners and society in general. On these occasions I consider how mankind may be connected like one great family in fraternal ties. I indulge a fond, perhaps an enthusiastic idea, that, as the world is evidently much less barbarous than it has been, its melioration must still be progressive; that nations are becoming more humanized in their policy, that the subject of ambition and causes for hostility are daily diminishing; and, in fine, that the period is not very remote, when the benefits of a liberal and free commerce will pretty generally succeed to the devastation and horrors of war," \* and Washington's hopes were shared and variously expressed by John Bright and Tennyson, Saint Simon and Mazzini, Victor Hugo and Jaurès. Today the sense of moderation, of compromise, of humanitarianism, of live and let live which the nineteenth century came to regard as a civilized attitude is being ridiculed as mediocre and unexciting, and its place is taken by a new esthetic delight in "heroism", in combat, in the ecstasies of war and violence. Peaceful life is replaced by the tension of permanent mobilization, violence becomes the normal method of government and power a self-sufficient goal.†

This recrudescence of an old order and of old ideals is nothing peculiarly German. Many men of all nations share it today, but nowhere has it been thought through with such methodical earnestness and metaphysical

\* *The Writings of George Washington*. (New York, 1891) Vol. 11, page 58 f.

† See René Avord, "Le Romantisme de la Violence," *La France Libre*, Vol. 1 (1941), No. 6.



depth, nowhere has it found the same powerful instruments of realization and nowhere has it found such a propitious soil for its growth as in Germany. As the American Revolution was the product of the whole intellectual climate of the time and of the thoughts of many men in many countries, so the German Revolution is borne by currents to which movements and men in non-German countries have contributed much. But in the same way as the American Revolution was the consummation of the whole liberal trend, so the German Revolution may be regarded as the consummation of the whole counter-revolutionary movement against the human progress of the last three centuries. As the American was the democratic revolution *kat exochen*, so the German Revolution is the fascist revolution *kat exochen*.

That is not to say that the German Revolution of 1933 was a necessary outcome of the preceding intellectual and social development of Germany. Like the history of every old and great nation, German history abounds in many and contradictory currents. The Fascist Revolution of 1933 carried Germany not by any historical necessity, but as a result of many historical accidents, of mistakes made by its adversaries, of intrigues, and of personalities. The most prominent representatives of German civilization and thought were in no ways forerunners of National Socialism and cannot be claimed by it even by the widest stretch of propagandist imagination. It is noteworthy that the greatest and so far unparalleled blossoming of the German spirit occurred in the years from 1770 to 1830, in the period of German political weakness and even humiliation. At

that time Germany abounded in so many creative spirits in the field of poetry and *belles lettres*, of philosophy and music, that there are few periods in history which could equal that one and none which would surpass it. It is equally noteworthy that after Germany established her political hegemony in Europe and later aspired to a similar position in the world, German intellectual life showed a definite weakening of its creative powers compared with the period a century before. The Second and the Third German Reich have nothing to show in the field of philosophy and music, of *belles lettres* or poetry, that could compare with the great classical period of Germanism.

Its leading minds were all representative of a truly humanitarian, individualistic, and universalist attitude, above all Goethe in his mature years, Kant and Beethoven. The three greatest Germans never doubted that duties towards mankind and the moral law take absolute precedence over duties towards the fatherland. The German classical writers saw men's goal in the perfection of the individual; with all their patriotism, they were in the first line humanitarian and cosmopolitan. Politically "the ideal of all German classical writers was a peaceful small state which seeks its glory exclusively in the arts and sciences." \* Wieland praised in 1780 the existing weak constitution of the moribund First Reich because it seemed to him to assure best the individual liberty of the Germans. The multitude of existing small states

\* Arnold Oskar Meyer, "Aus der Geschichte des deutschen Nationalgefühls," *Deutsche und Engländer. Wesen und Werden in grosser Geschichte*. (Munich, 1937), page 42.

made it possible for the German subject of a despotic prince to escape to a neighboring territory and to choose in the large variety of German princes and political entities that which seemed most conducive to the unhampered development of his individual faculties. Wieland was convinced that "as long as we (the Germans) will preserve it (the then status of Germany) no great civilized people in the world will enjoy a higher degree of human and civic liberty and will be more secure against political and ecclesiastical subjugation and serfdom than the Germans." \*

Even after nationalism had in the nineteenth century become a dominant tendency in German life, the liberal forces who wished to create a German nation in accordance with the principles of liberty and equality were by no means inconsiderable. It was an historical accident which determined even the course of Prussian development. In 1862 had Crown Prince Frederick succeeded his father and had Bismarck not become prime minister of Prussia, the unification of Germany could have been accomplished in the spirit of 1848 and with a strengthening of the parliamentary foundations of German political life. The longevity of William I and the premature death of Frederick III sealed a development which in no way can be regarded as inevitable. To deny claims that National Socialism is the only genuine form of German civilization it is sufficient to point out the strictly democratic character of the German-Swiss cantons, undoubtedly Germanic in their origin, and on the

\* *Sämtliche Werke* (Leipzig, 1794-1801), Vol. 15, page 362. See the whole passage starting on p. 359.

other hand the fact that the leading National Socialists and most of their doctrines came from those Austrian and Prussian frontier lands of German colonization where the inhabitants are of the most mixed descent.

Nevertheless, fascism found in Germany a more fruitful soil than anywhere else. Under fascism we understand the total and uncompromising rejection of the great Western revolutions of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, of the spirit of 1688, of 1776, and of 1789. Fascism implies the denial of individual liberty, of human equality, and of the desirability of a rational peaceful order. It glorifies war and warriors, hierarchy, and authority, discipline and obedience. It elevates the distinctive character of each nation, as opposed to others, to an absolute; it regards this nation and its interests as a first and foremost consideration and as the only standard of what is good and true. It therefore rejects all absolute standards of ethics and law, and thereby the oneness of the human spirit and all intercourse based on reciprocity. It develops a complete cynicism in relation to moral values, and an ecstasy of action in itself, devoid of any ethical content, except for the intoxication with the group spirit and with devotion to the group. As fascism believes in the immutable status of man, in his being determined by unchangeable biological factors, it denies the perfectibility of men, it reduces man and society to the level of nature. Fascism, an attitude of mind and an interpretation of man,\* is everywhere represented

\* See my *Force or Reason*, 3rd ed. (Cambridge, Mass., 1938), and "The Totalitarian Philosophy of War" in *Not by Arms Alone* (Cambridge, Mass., 1941).

by individuals and groups, in Italy and Greece, in Great Britain and in the United States, among Jews and among Arabs, in Brazil and in China. As a twentieth-century movement,—a century in which mankind is growing towards a unity unknown in any previous period of history,—it is necessarily universal. But of all countries and people Germany offered the best soil for the growth of fascism in its most uncompromising form, and this by no means as a result of the defeat in the First World War, and certainly not as a result of the peace treaty of Versailles, but as a consequence of social and political realities and of intellectual attitudes reaching far more deeply into the past and into the texture of the German mind and of German national life.

## V

Four different roots of German contemporary totalitarianism are easily discernible: the Prussian tradition, the romantic tradition, the racial theory, and the revaluation of all values to which Friedrich Nietzsche gave the first forceful expression. The kernel of nineteenth-century Prussia, where the Prussian tradition, the spirit of Potsdam, originated and grew, are the lands east of the Elbe, Brandenburg, Pomerania, and eastern Prussia, lands which were still inhabited in the thirteenth century by Slavs, were then subjugated by German warriors and settlers in whom the mentality of colonial times has continued to exist, the feeling of superiority of a master race, over a native and passive population. The Hohenzollern princes forged different lands without any organic unit, without common historical traditions, into

a new state, a state with very few economic resources, of great poverty of soil, and with extremely long and almost indefensible frontiers unprotected by any natural barriers. It was the immense will power of the great Prussian kings, especially Frederick William I and Frederick II, which succeeded against all obstacles of nature in creating in the plains of northeastern Germany a powerful state which soon could take its place among the great powers. They could do it by complete devotion to the ideal of a powerful state, by the concentration of all economic, moral, and intellectual resources of the whole population upon one aim: the creation of a powerful army as the center and the life force of the state. It is well known that Mirabeau declared that while other states possessed armies, in Prussia the army possessed the state. In spite of its poverty and its lack of organic growth the Prussian state developed an army always ready to strike at its enemies unawares and to strike its deadliest. This miracle of will power was made possible by a truly Spartan spirit of devotion to patriotic duty and military virtue, by extreme rational efficiency, frugality, precision, and discipline. In Prussia the army was not only an instrument of policy, it became the ideal way of existence for the whole community, the model of all political and private life. In the nineteenth century Otto von Bismarck and Albert von Roon made the Prussian army the instrument of the so-called unification of Germany which was in reality an aggrandizement of Prussia by the direct or indirect inclusion of other German lands under Prussian control.

It is important to understand that in Prussia there did

not develop, as in Western Europe, a society independent from the state and critical of the state. The state, as in Sparta, was not only the center of all social and political life but also the regulating principle of all ethical life and of all moral aspirations. The Germany created by Bismarck "has left the realization of all ethical wants to the state or, to express it in a better way, has expected it in the highest sense from the state." \*

Bismarck was not a German nationalist. Nor had he any understanding of what present-day German nationalism calls *folk*. He did not serve the German national movement; it served him. Though he was a Christian, he never allowed his religious conceptions to influence or to limit his policy which was entirely devoted to one aim: the power of Prussia. "His religion meant, in his conception of the state, no more than it had meant in that of Frederick the Great. It had to serve the state, and Bismarck's whole intellectual development is a liberation from the Christian conception of the state. Bismarck would have never said that the state is a moral concept. Such a formula would have appeared to him as an inadmissible limitation of his political methods and aims." † This militarism of the Prussian monarchy and this integration of all ethical life in this state and its justification by this state separated the Prussian state concept from that of the Western world.

\* Paul Joachimsen, "Zur historischen Psychologie des deutschen Staatsgedankens," *Die Dioskuren*, Vol. 1. (Munich, 1922), page 157.

† Paul Joachimsen, *ibid.*, page 152. "Die Erlösung der sittlichen Bedürftigkeit im Staate und durch den Staat ist das Kennzeichen des deutschen Staatsgedankens geblieben." *Ibid.*, page 170.

More fundamentally opposed to Western liberalism than the Prussian state idea was German romanticism. In it, like Russian nationalism in its Slavophil tendencies, German nationalism asserted itself against the westernization of Germany in the wake of the French Revolution and of the influences emanating from liberal and parliamentary England. Romanticism meant something different in Germany than in the Western countries. While here it remained a mode of artistic expression in literature, in Germany it became a *Weltanschauung*, a philosophic creed, applied to and explaining history, political theory, law, and the totality of social life and development. Romanticism continued in Germany the work which the German humanists of the Renaissance period had begun, who looked for a justification of Germany's universal claim to world domination and world leadership to past times, when German tribes had overrun and subjugated the Roman Empire and the then known world. The humanists had identified the Germans of their own day with those about whom Tacitus had written his "Germania," which had just been rediscovered, and saw in Arminius who had unified the German tribes for a decisive victory over Rome the model German hero.\* Now romanticism, when it felt Germany's original development threatened by the intellectual developments and influences of Western liberalism at the beginning of the nineteenth century, took up the fight against Western enlightenment, against rationalism, against the spirit of the Western revolutions, with their emphasis upon in-

\* Paul Joachimsen, *ibid.*, page 116.



dividual liberty and human equality. It regarded the rationalism, optimism, and individualism of the West as something hollow and superficial and liked to oppose to its clarity the dark profundity of the German soul. Its eyes were not turned towards the future, a future common to all humanity; they were fascinated by the past, a past which was peculiar to each people. Instead of the common they stressed the peculiar; they rejected the concept of equality which gives no superiority to the supposedly exceptional. They rejected the notion of any common universal law equally binding upon all men and races; and for them the superior man, and maybe one day the superior race, was a law unto himself. The concept of the super man and of the super race, which rejects the rational as well as the religious concept of man, dawned upon the horizon of German romanticism.\*

It was fully developed by the two greatest German thinkers and artists of the second half of the nineteenth century, Richard Wagner and Friedrich Nietzsche. Both were thinkers, artists, and prophets at the same time. Wagner became the first German proponent of note of the racial theory which his son-in-law, Houston Stewart Chamberlain, expounded in his "The Foundations of the Nineteenth Century." The meaning of Germanism changed; while folkdom (*Volkstum*) had been for Herder a purely cultural concept, it became for Richard Wagner a racial concept; he saw the future of Germany in a regeneration of racial consciousness. He directed the attention of the German people to the

\* See my *Revolutions and Dictatorships* 2nd ed. (Cambridge, Mass., 1941), Chapter VII.

myths of gods and heroes of a dim prehistoric past; through him they were raised to the dignity of an inspiring example for the twentieth century. The chthonic forces of blood and soil, of hoary and pre-rational antiquity, were glorified as the determining forces of a history in which man was not capable of any free spiritual growth and perfection and, therefore, fatality alone reigned. The myths which were to express the sense of life and history had no relation to any objective standards of truth, they were measured according to their effectiveness to inspire the will.

Four years after Richard Wagner's death, a German sociologist, Ferdinand Tönnies, published a book, *Gemeinschaft und Gesellschaft* (Community and Society), which became fundamental for German social science. It contrasted two ideal types of societal organization. The Community saw the totality and wholeness in the group of which the individual was only part. It was formed by unconscious factors, by the deep dark forces of instinct. It was irrational in its origins and in its ties, deeply embedded in the forces of nature and growing organically. It was characteristic of primitive, and to a lesser extent of feudal, times. Society on the other hand was characteristic of modern bourgeois civilization. It set the wholeness and totality in the individual, who was prior to the group, which was a sociological concept owing its origin to rational motives and clear insight into interests. It should be noted that though Tönnies showed some nostalgic longing for the Community, he understood that Society was the mark of high civilization and of a higher morality, that it demanded a respect for

truth and law and their universality, a sense of reciprocity and of contractual fidelity, unknown in the more primitive forms. But German social science soon contrasted the "organic depth" of Community, regarded as peculiarly German (though the Russian Slavophiles claimed it as peculiarly Russian), with the "mechanic superficiality" of Society regarded as characteristic of Western bourgeois society. This contrast was often expressed as that of *Kultur* and civilization. A daring step could go so far as to doubt the value of civilization and of civilized life at all and to oppose to it the primeval forces of nature, a nature not fundamentally good and tending toward harmony as the eighteenth century concept, but beyond good and evil, the scene of permanent and meaningless strife and struggle.

This revaluation of all values was the work of Friedrich Nietzsche, undoubtedly one of the leading and most fascinating figures of the latter nineteenth century. With an unheard-of sensibility he focussed the yet almost imperceptibly approaching age of a new barbarism. A solitary prophet, with a critical mind of unprecedented sharpness and a burning vision of unprecedented daring, he was typically German in his complete disregard of social and political reality and in his total absorption in pure and irresponsible thought. This lonely philosopher in the vacuum could exhibit an audacity of exploration which makes his work one of the most memorable feasts of the spirit, he could push his thoughts to the limit where the abyss yawns in which he finally lost himself, a tightrope walker over the dark worlds of the subhuman and the titanic, in which the

human is irretrievably lost. He represented an extreme case of the complete break between the world of thought and the world of reality, which characterized so much of German intellectual life, he had no sense and responsibility for the consequences of his thought once it was brought down from his lofty and unreachable mountain peaks to the low lands of common humanity which he despised.\*

Relentlessly he unmasked all the shames and compromises of civilization, all the weaknesses and pettiness of man. Ethics which had dominated Western life from the time of Socrates and of the Hebrew prophets, ethics which found a fundamentally identical expression in Buddhism, in the Stoa and in Christianity, he rejected contemptuously as a Jewish-Christian invention for the protection of the weak and the dispossession of the strong. He wished to destroy all the accepted ethical values, because with their stress upon equality and humanity, upon pity and charity they undermined Life. For the new man for whom he longed, he wrote new tables of law, the laws of "Life" and "Nature," with the supreme command of living a strong life, of asserting the will to power and domination with good conscience, even if it implies the extermination or the degradation of everything weaker or less vigorous. No goal remains but success in the unending and ever recurrent struggle for self-assertion and power. Success determines truth and goodness. Life is war, and the strong races are the

\* See Thomas Mann "Denken und Leben," *The Virginia Quarterly Review*, Summer 1941; Crane Brinton, *Nietzsche* (Cambridge, Mass., 1941); J. A. Cramb, *Germany and England* (New York, 1914), pages 126-130.

elemental and wholesome forces of triumphant life which does not care for the musty concepts of ethical goodness or truth.

"For war trains men to be free. What in sooth is freedom? To grow more indifferent to hardship, to severity, to privation, and even to life itself. To be ready to sacrifice men for one's cause, one's self included. Freedom denotes that the virile instincts which rejoice in war and in victory prevail over other instincts; for instance, over the instincts of happiness. The man who has won his freedom, and how much more so the spirit that has won its freedom, tramples ruthlessly upon that contemptible kind of comfort which tea-grocers, Christians, cows, women, Englishmen and other democrats worship in their dreams. The free man is a warrior." \* And of the strong aristocratic races in which his heart delighted Nietzsche said glowingly: "They revert to the innocence of the beast of prey conscience, like jubilant monsters, who perhaps come from a ghastly bout of murder, arson, rape, and torture, with bravado and a moral equanimity as though merely some wild student's prank had been played, perfectly convinced that the poets have now an ample theme to sing and celebrate. It is impossible not to recognise at the core of all these aristocratic races the beast of prey; the magnificent blonde brute, avidly rampant for spoil and victory . . . This audacity of aristocratic races, mad, absurd, and spasmodic as may be its expression, the incalculable and fantastic nature of their enterprises, their nonchalance and contempt for safety, body, life,

\* *The Complete Works* (ed. by Dr. Oscar Levy), Vol. XVI, page 94.

and comfort, their awful joy and intense delight in all the ecstasies of victory and cruelty. . .” \*

Nietzsche's foremost disciple was Oswald Spengler who in his prediction of the coming age of Caesarism, in his opposition of the power of blood to that of gold, and in his identification of Prussianism with true Socialism, became one of the most important ideological forerunners of National Socialism, though he lived long enough to witness what he considered the disfigured realization of his philosophy and to turn away in disgust from the realities of National Socialism. But he had drunk fully from the intoxicating wine of Nietzscheanism, as later interpreted by National Socialism, when he asked: “If I call a man a beast of prey, whom do I offend—man or beast? For the great beasts of prey are noble creatures of the most perfect type and without the hypocritical human morality born of weakness.” More than ten years later, in his last work, he wrote in the same vein jubilantly of a world in which fascism had started its triumphal march. “The age-old barbarism which for centuries lay bound and hidden under the severe discipline of a high culture is again awakening, that warlike healthy joy in one's own strength, which despises the age of rationalistic thought and literature, that unbroken instinct of a strong race which wishes to live otherwise than under the pressure of a mass of books and bookish ideas.” †

Spengler foresaw the terrifying vision of the new order as it begins to emerge from National Socialist

\* *Ibidem*, vol. XIII, page 40.

† *Hour of Decision* (New York, 1934) page 19.

victories; a world in which the multitudes of subjugated peoples will be reduced to the almost animal level of disarmed, peaceful, and patiently toiling rural serfs, bearing without hope and without revolt the yoke of proud and armed bands of conquerors. In this *pau Germanica* the lethargic masses, dumb and helpless, will resemble Markham's "Man with the Hoe," whose face shows the "emptiness of the ages," "on his back the burden of the world, a thing that grieves not and that never hopes, stolid and stunned, a brother to the ox." Civilization will be dead, primitive times will have returned. How opposed in every line is this future to Walt Whitman's vision: "And it is from such materials—from the democracy with its manly heart and its lion strength, spurning the ligatures wherewith drivellers would bind it—that we are to expect the great Future of this Western world! a scope involving such unparalleled human happiness and national freedom, to such unnumbered myriads, that the heart of a true *man* leaps with a mighty joy only to think of it! God works out his greatest results by such means; and while each popingay priest of the mummary of the past is babbling his alarm, the youthful Genius of the people passes swiftly over era after era of change and improvement, and races of human beings erewhile down in gloom or bondage rise gradually toward that majestic development which the good God doubtless loves to witness." \*

\* *The Uncollected Poetry and Prose of Walt Whitman*, ed. Emory Holloway (Garden City, N. Y., 1921) vol. 1, page 159. There also: "Is not this better than the despairing apathy wherewith the populace of Russia and . . . the miserable German states—those *well-ordered* governments—endure the black-hearted rapacity of their rulers?"

## VI

National Socialism represents the effective blending and vulgarisation of these four trends, Prussianism, Romanticism, racialism and Nietzscheanism, for consumption in an age of masses and industrial technique. All the inner and deep contradictions of the four trends are smoothed over by the emphasis upon German racial mission, according to which the lowliest German is, by the "iron logic of nature," unalterably superior to any member of other races. In the strict hierarchy of races, on which alone a permanent world order can be built, the German race and German thought must lead and must be unconditionally obeyed. German world conquest and totalitarian world revolution become two sides of the same process: their fusion gives uncomparable elan and power to both. An immense confidence of being able to mold the world according to their image elates German National Socialist youth. Filled with a fanatical faith, they see only the alternative of world dominion or ruin, *Weltmacht* or *Untergang*. They know that they live in a unique time, a *Weltenwende* or *Zeitenwende*, when, what must appear to the outside world as almost unimaginable and unbelievably fantastic, can become reality, if willed with wholehearted determination and a brutal will to power, not shrinking before any terror or horror.\*

Es zittern die morschen Knochen der Welt vor dem grossen Krieg.

Wir haben den Schrecken gebrochen; für uns wars ein grosser Sieg.

\* See E. Y. Hartshorne, *German Youth and the Nazi Dream of Victory*, (New York: Farrar & Rinehart, 1941).



Wir werden weiter marschieren, wenn alles in Scherben fällt,  
Denn heute gehört uns Deutschland und morgen die ganze  
Welt.

On the road to the goal two great obstacles present themselves, in the political field the resources and the will to independence of the United States, in the ideological field democracy's love of liberty and individual dignity. Again, as in the case of Germany and authoritarianism, the two forces opposed to German world domination and to the totalitarian world revolution, fuse. As a result of its history and of the present situation the United States becomes the shield of world democracy as Germany has become the spear of world totalitarianism. The ultimate and decisive adversary of National Socialist Germany is not Great Britain or France, not Russia or Japan, though these must be subjugated and controlled too; it is the United States.

While German humanists and Romanticists tried to freeze the world into the forms of legendary concepts of the Germany in the time of Tacitus or of the Middle Ages, National Socialism reaches even beyond that past to pre-historical times as the decisive mold of future mankind. It is the most audacious counter-revolution ever undertaken, not only against the last three revolutionary centuries, but against the whole development from Socrates and the Hebrew prophets to the present. This most resolute denial of progress does not appear in the form of a conservative counter-revolution, but with the flaming ardor and force of a true revolution, with a goal as unlimited as will itself is. Reason and the inventions and discoveries of the human mind are put into

the service of this will and its relentless drive of force. The second third of the twentieth century, perhaps the most decisive period in world history, witnesses the clash of "two revolutions." National Socialism is the counter-revolution in a revolutionary form. Democracy has been and is the revolution, but it has lost its revolutionary form and inspiration. It must regain its imagination and vision, it must learn to put again will and force into the service of reason. The good, old and simple words, liberty, truth, justice, must again impose their full meaning upon life and actions. The revolutionary forces of ethical and human progress which have stagnated in complacency, cynicism, egotism and irresponsibility, can rise to a new clarity under the fire of the counter-revolution. A European philosopher who knows fascism most intimately, has pointed out that the apparent decadence of liberty in our time is a strange sort of decadence, in that "it is illumined by no flash of a new ideal that is to replace the old, in that no new order is put forward to replace the order that is being attacked. The liberal ideal is a moral ideal, expressing an aspiration towards a better humanity and a higher civilization. The new ideal that is to triumph should present itself with promise of a richer, deeper humanity. Now the one alternative to freedom that is being practically suggested in our day cannot be regarded as offering any such promise. It is the alternative of violence, and violence, whether of race or country or proletariat, can have no status as morality. Violence contains within itself none of those energies that enhance civilized human living." Violence or authority is arid, avoiding all

critically tested arguments and discussions; it is empty as an ideal of spiritual life. Freedom and equality have been the greatest forces in history to animate men in their strife for a more moral life, for a more human civilization. There is nothing to take the place. The National-Socialist faith: world dominion or ruin, can be tested by the liberal faith: freedom or moral death. But here again the philosopher warns with a word that illumines the whole world crisis of our days: "No people will be truly free till all peoples are free." \*

\* Benedotte Croce in *Freedom, Its Meaning*, ed. by Ruth Nanda Anshen (New York, 1940) pages 24 f. 41.

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## The Technology of Democracy

*BY ALFRED M. BINGHAM*

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THE revolution which has gripped the whole world since 1914 is, clearly enough, a phase of the technological revolution which began with the application of the scientific method to industry. The steam engine is the symbol of the machine which transformed the whole face of the earth and all man's social arrangements during the nineteenth century. The airplane, depending in its turn on the internal combustion engine and the electric impulse, is the symbol of the present revolutionary phase.

The scientific method has not yet been applied convincingly to the historical process itself, in which it has become dominant. Marx was one of the first to see clearly the extent of the social upheaval resulting from technological change. But with psychology and the social sciences in their infancy, the scientific "laws" he deduced to understand the process were far afield, and the techniques he proposed for controlling the revolution in the interests of human freedom produced in practice

the first of the totalitarian regimes. Few other observers, however, appreciated the magnitude of the social changes that first the "machine age" and then the "power age" were inducing. Henry Adams, one of the boldest of these, shrank in consternation from what he sensed was imminent, unable to see how the forces could be controlled.

Yet a conscious attempt to understand and control those forces is essential to our survival today—or at least essential to the survival of those habits of freedom which fostered the scientific method in the first place, and which we feel basic to a decent human existence. Democracy depends not merely on beating back the forces of brutality and tyranny that have arisen out of its own failures, but on developing new social techniques that will be competent in the face of present day requirements. Believers in freedom must learn how to make the social adjustments to the airplane and the radio in ways that will perpetuate and enlarge freedom. Hitler and Stalin and the wars now in progress represent more the failure of democracy to make these adjustments than they represent a positive alternative to democracy.

The adjustments required are fundamentally adjustments of integration. The scientific method has permitted a vast increase in the world's population, while at the same time bringing all these individuals into much more crowded relation to each other. Social adjustment requires a new level of administrative management.

The predominantly *laissez faire* economy and international free trade of the nineteenth century provided an extraordinarily effective mechanism of adjustment,

and one that by its very nature encouraged individual freedom. The gradual disappearance of that free economy is by now an old story.

In industry mass production and the corporate monopoly produced an economic unit that was quite unmanageable by the old individualistic techniques. In the economic system as a whole the free market mechanism was increasingly interfered with, both by government and by big business, and different types of collectivism took over one function after another previously left to "natural" economic forces, while the maintenance of general economic stability and prosperity was more and more accepted as a public responsibility. At the same time social welfare and social security became a recognized governmental function, as the individual could no longer cope with the complex hazards of the twentieth century by himself.

All these trends meant that the size and number of the social groups within which the individual lived his life were constantly increasing. The need for government to overcome anarchy was no longer limited to the provision of a few local policemen, but extended to all these groupings. And to cap the crisis, lack of integration proved most serious of all in the largest grouping of all, the world as a whole; international anarchy has now grown to proportions that threaten the whole social fabric.

Nothing but new techniques of administrative management can cope with the new problems of social adjustment. So far the evidence has been that in the absence of democratic techniques, the "technological im-

perative" will bring forth non-democratic techniques. Anarchy is a vacuum that apparently must be filled. The Churchills and the Roosevelts will use a non-democratic technique as readily as the Hitlers and Stalins where none other is available, though the spirit and the purpose of its use may be entirely different. Likewise General Motors or the American "Tel. & Tel." or J. P. Morgan will perform an essential integrating task in the absence of a responsible authority.

The "managerial revolution," as popularized by James Burnham, represents the dominance of the function of management, and a resultant shift in social and political dominance. The capitalist class was an elite owning class that became politically dominant with the overthrow of the feudal system. The "managing" class seems to be rising to dominance today.\* The era of capitalist dominance was compatible with the development of political democracy, and the "managerial revolution" is compatible with a great extension of democracy, as under the New Deal; but the Nazi variant seems to have certain immediate advantages that can be overcome only by swift improvements in the techniques of democratic management.

## II. *The Limitations of Traditional Democracy*

In one sense democracy is as old as human aspiration. The great religions have all stressed the value of

\* In my "Insurgent America" (1935) I sought to show the fallacy of the Marxist expectation that the proletariat would become the dominant class, and ventured "the conclusion that the technical and managerial middle-classes are slated to be next in the sequence of ruling classes."

the individual soul. Christianity in particular, with its emphasis on the universal fatherhood of God, and the consequent universal brotherhood of man, is one of the main sources of the democratic idea. Greek philosophy, linked with the Athenian and Roman experience of republican forms, is a related antecedent.

The primitive tribe and the ancient city state both permitted a simple form of democratic procedure, as did many a relatively simple type of economic or political group during the Middle Ages. But it was only with the development of modern capitalism that democracy found a really favorable environment. Free enterprise gave the opportunity for free political institutions. At the same time these new institutions were shaped and conditioned by the capitalist system in which they grew up.

Democracy means many things. But in general it is convenient to associate the word with two principal meanings. First it is a social attitude, the democratic "way of life," associated with ideas of equality, individual freedom, and human brotherhood, and rooted in the religious-philosophical concept of the worth of the individual human personality. All institutional devices can be tested, to determine whether or not they are democratic, by asking whether or not they promote the worth of the individual personality.

But there are a particular set of institutional devices, for political government, which are also thought of as democracy. In that second and more specific sense democracy is a "form of government"—"rule by the people." In their traditional form, especially as writ-



ten into the American and British constitutional systems, these devices consist primarily of a parliament or congress of elected representatives, the independence of the judiciary, and a set of "civil liberties."

The representative parliament was a great improvement on the general assembly in which every citizen had a vote, though the latter still survives in town meetings and many non-political organizations. Representation permits an assembly of manageable size and of specialized experience. The development of parliamentary procedure and the legislative committee have permitted even relatively unwieldy bodies to function effectively. Parliamentary government has been most successful where two parties with a common code of loyalties—each willing to "play the game"—have given order and coherence and continuity to the legislative process. Attempts to improve on the traditional parliamentary system in recent years—first by the restoration of some of the features of the popular assembly through the initiative and referendum, and secondly by assuring a more accurate reflection of the electorate through proportional representation—have weakened it as much as they have strengthened it. But it remains one of the marvelous inventions of the human mind for democratic group action.

The separation of powers, erroneously thought since the days of Montesquieu, at least in this country, to require a separation of legislative and executive powers, is essentially a matter of the independence of the judiciary. What it means to have public officials themselves subject to the laws they make and enforce, so that a govern-

ment is truly a "government of laws and not of men," has been dramatically brought out by the Nazi and Soviet secret police and the complete subordination of the judiciary to the dictator's whim.

The independence of the judiciary is fundamental to civil liberties. Though the American Civil Liberties Union could attest to the fact that freedom of speech and assembly and other civil rights sometimes have to be vigorously defended from corrupt or reactionary judges, still, without the courts there would be no adequate safeguards at all.

Yet it should be pointed out at this stage that civil liberties and an independent judiciary are negative aspects of democracy. They are institutional devices to protect the individual from arbitrary acts of his government rather than devices to facilitate the functions of government. And if the need today is better social integration and management, then reliance must be placed on positive rather than negative devices.

It is here that the importance of administration becomes apparent. Under the traditional American separation of powers legislatures were supposed to enact laws and the executive was to execute them, and there was so little continuing administration that the administrative function was considered a sort of appendage to the executive function. In our state capitals, for instance, almost no provision was made until a generation ago for other than legislative halls, executive chambers, and a supreme court room; within the last few years enormous office buildings have been erected to house the growing number of state officials. And the

federal administration has become a vast army of civil servants.

This great administrative mechanism has grown in response to definite social pressures and the real demands of a society requiring ever more devices for integration. Yet the alarm of conservatives who saw this proliferation of bureaucracy, combining legislative, executive and judicial functions, as a menace to traditional democracy, was fully justified. It had, in fact, no place in the traditional democracy. And being added on as an appendage to the executive branch—overwhelming the original executive function—it tended quite to distort the original balance.

Not that the combination of legislative and executive functions was as dangerous as some thought, for in the English constitutional system the executive was always dependent on Parliament. And administration and management are necessarily greatly concerned with making rules as well as in performing continuing functions. The danger lay in the concentration of arbitrary power, and in the absence of any techniques by which administrative management might be infused with the democratic spirit.

So long as elected parliamentary institutions and an elected or responsible executive remained, there could be a check on the bureaucratic or arbitrary irresponsibility of administrative officials. But the administrative process itself was as capable of being an instrument of tyranny as of democracy.

This, then, is perhaps the greatest weakness of the traditional democratic system, that it is not designed for

the immense administrative tasks governments are now called upon to perform. And for that reason democracies are afraid of action, since so much action must today be administrative action. When particular pressures are at work administrative agencies do result: gouging railroad rates produce an Interstate Commerce Commission, the liquor traffic calls forth administrative regulation, the farmer's interest evokes a vast Department of Agriculture to help him. But the general interest often is left uncared for. Thus the universal consumer interest is so diffuse as to be virtually ignored. And national policies, whether domestic or foreign, are likely to be left to the winds of fate—until a major depression or a major war force some kind of action, even if only improvised by executive hunch.

The lack of over-all economic management to prevent depressions and maintain full employment highlights a second major weakness of our traditional democracy. The absence of democratic economic techniques, adequate to present-day economic realities, extends all the way from the national economy as a whole, with its booms and slumps, cyclical and secular trends, down to the individual's job, which for the great majority is now no longer an independent business or trade, but employment at a wage or salary by and for someone else.

Much has been written in recent years of industrial feudalism, and of the great monopolistic empires that have been built up by big business, to the destruction of the individuality and the dignity of the worker. In part that balance has been rectified by the swift growth of

labor unions. But it is still hardly realized that with the passage of free land and free enterprise for all, most people are doomed to employment in an enterprise they do not own, and so long as the master-and-servant relation dominates that employment, even when relieved by equality of bargaining power, democracy will be unreal to most people most of the time. Our traditional democracy was not designed for and does not extend into modern business and industry.

The third great limitation of traditional democracy is in the international field. In fact, until the World War, the foreign relations even of democratic states were carried on by secret diplomacy under the arbitrary control of the executive in a manner directly inherited from absolute monarchy. When, in the post-war period, partly as a result of Wilson's demand for "open" diplomacy, the representatives of the people attempted to exercise more control over foreign affairs, the result was an inept vacillation worse than the pre-war secret diplomacy: in England, for instance, popular pressure demanded both disarmament and collective security, along with the maintenance of the British Empire intact—a policy which had more to do with the Munich settlement than the perfidy of the Tories.

The fact seems to be that power politics is not a game for democratic peoples to play. In the days of our "manifest destiny" we in America had no dangerous antagonists. And in the British Empire's prime world peace could be managed, after a fashion, by the British Navy, the Foreign Office, and the pound sterling. But those days are behind us. The only way the world can

be made really safe for democracy is by finding an alternative to power politics in the international sphere. Democracies cannot move with sufficient speed, decision and ruthlessness to compete with other national states, in the field of force. While temporary dictatorships can be set up in time of war, and perhaps even extended for some time after a war, without destroying the democratic habit in a country where that habit is second nature, in the long run the abolition of war through international government is essential to the survival of democracy.

What democratic institutions are available for supranational government, is a question vastly complicated by the unequal development of different parts of the world. Nowhere is ingenuity and trained intelligence more needed. A great variety of techniques and procedures will have to be evolved if the question is ever to be adequately answered, but we may be sure that the flexibility of the federal method will be found most useful.

### III. *The Totalitarian Alternative*

It is in the very fields where traditional democracy has failed most signally that the new despotism has been most effective.

Administrative management, from being an unwelcome stepchild of democratic government, has become the ruling principle of the totalitarian regimes. Instead of being afraid of taking over new functions, the totalitarian bureaucracies have greedily sought to manage everything. "The Party" becomes the training ground

for the "vocation of leadership," and develops into the hierarchy of the ruling class.

To no small extent the managerial techniques of the totalitarian regimes are derived from big business. Army discipline and a military hierarchy are characteristic of the party controls, but the trusts and trade associations, the company unions and "scientific management" of American big business have found a ready counterpart in the Nazi and Communist systems.

It has been argued against the theory of a "managerial revolution" that industrial and business managers are not in control in the totalitarian regimes since the party bureaucracy and its "leaders" hold the whip hand. But on the other hand, the essence of management is personnel management. And in their manipulation of people, whether by terror or propaganda, the totalitarian party dictatorships have shown supreme competence.

It may be doubted whether the totalitarian techniques of management will prove adequate to the enlarged tasks being thrust upon them. Nazi dictatorship depends to a considerable extent on propaganda appeals to national sentiment and feelings of racial superiority, neither of which can be used in effective management of conquered peoples. Moreover, "scientific management" as it has developed, even in big business organization, has tended increasingly to emphasize voluntary participation, which means democracy; the totalitarian method of management may break down in time, particularly when no longer sustained by the tense loyalties of a war situation.

Nevertheless, there can be no doubt that the totali-

tarian regimes have vastly extended the scope and effectiveness of public administrative management. And nowhere is that more obvious than in the field of overall economic controls, in which the democracies have failed most conspicuously. Hitler, in particular, has shown that it is possible, by methods of monetary management and other means, to eliminate unemployment and achieve a maximum utilization of productive capacity, at least for war purposes. The democracies themselves have adopted techniques of economic management—for the control of prices, foreign trade, allocation of raw materials, and the like—first developed by the totalitarian regimes. For such partial controls, as well as for economic planning in general, there are as yet no real democratic techniques, and, with war and national emergency as excuse, the democracies have found it necessary to act in ways that often were mere imitations of the dictatorships.

In international integration likewise, where the democracies have had little to offer since the mechanism of the world market broke down, the dictators have boldly improvised. The "New Order" which Japan aims at in East Asia and the "New Order" Germany has been building in Europe rest on the treacherous foundations of blood and terror, but at least they express the need for regional and continental integration, which the democracies were not able to achieve when they had the chance. If Germany succeeds in conquering the world, which seems to be the only logical stopping place on her present career of conquest, she will at least have succeeded in imposing a planetary integration which is one



of the basic needs of our time. And there is reason to believe that her career of conquest can be turned back only as those committed to democracy are able to offer an alternative method of securing at least the minimum degree of world coördination.

Totalitarianism, as suggested, represents a social process whereby a social vacuum has been filled. The established techniques of democracy, practised by the dominant nations of the world, were unable to meet the needs of administrative management and integration, particularly in the economic field, to prevent depression, and in the international field, to prevent war. But in filling those fields, totalitarianism went back and destroyed democracy even in the fields where it had been tolerably competent. Parliamentary institutions and civil liberties interfered with totalitarian administration, and were abolished.

That their abolition was not wholly due to the totalitarian philosophy which could brook no division of opinion, is indicated by the tendency even in democracies to grow impatient with parliamentary debate and free speech when national crises give urgency to the new administrative tasks. Government administrative officials tend to think of parliamentary procedures as merely obstructionist. National unity in times like these decries opposition. Those who have the execution of foreign policy in their charge, feel they must act decisively and swiftly, without public debate, if they are to act at all.

As the collective functions for which there are as yet no developed democratic techniques become more important, we are likely to abandon even our traditional

democratic institutions. The survival of democracy, then, depends on devising new institutional procedures by which the new functions can be democratically performed.

#### IV. *Democratic Techniques in Administration*

With the growth of the administrative aspect of government, ways must be found of bringing democracy into administration. Reliance cannot be placed merely on keeping the polls open and uncontrolled on election day, or maintaining freedom of criticism. Administration is a daily routine. Periodic elections and occasional investigations and exposures provide something of a safeguard against abuses, but they do not infuse the administrative process with the democratic idea.

Safeguards against administrative abuses—bureaucracy, arbitrariness, greed for power—are, of course, essential. But it is always more important to assure the positive aspects of sound management, which will enlarge human personality rather than crush it, and at the same time be efficient. At every stage in developing democratic administrative techniques the double test must be made, of efficiency in performing the function required, and of the effect on all personalities concerned.

Aside from functional efficiency, democratic administrative procedures must promote the largest degree of participation by those affected, as well as responsibility to the public and responsiveness to individual needs. Participation should include the individuals who constitute the administrative machinery, so that each administrative agency itself presents a pattern of work-

ing democracy; but this is a problem that every business and industrial unit must learn to solve, too, and is not peculiar to public administration. On the other hand, public administration should seek to provide methods for the participation also of that part of the public which it serves: for example, a State Department of Motor Vehicles should treat car owners and drivers not as children or as automatons, but as individuals whose intelligent coöperation in the maintenance and improvement of motor transportation is to be constantly sought.

Responsibility to the public is another essential of democratic public administration. Where administrative officials are appointed by elected executives, there is one type of direct responsibility; if administration is bad, the accounting comes on election day, and a crude house cleaning may take place. But with civil service reform, that kind of responsibility is lost, except perhaps as regards departmental heads, and there is a trend toward an irremovable and irresponsible bureaucracy.

Responsiveness to individual needs is closely allied to public responsibility. One of the traditional vices of the bureaucrat is his addiction to a routine which loses sight of the human needs sought to be met. The bureaucrat sometimes seems to become as insensitive as a machine. The political appointee, and the spoilsman of the Tammany type, are likely to be more kindly and human in their response to individual needs, at least of those who "vote right," than the honest civil servant who owes his position to "merit."

It is improbable that there are any techniques or de-

vices to be discovered which are not at least foreshadowed in procedures now in use. The problem is rather to promote certain existing trends in administration and discourage others, than to invent procedures out of whole cloth. Let us test a number of these devices and trends in terms of the principles here laid down.

*The merit system*, as already suggested, has meant some loss in democracy, in the search after honesty, efficiency and independence. Its proponents, significantly enough, have usually come from the more prosperous elements in the community, who are more concerned with what taxes they pay the government than what services they get from it.

Yet the evils of the old spoils system are real enough. The selection and promotion of personnel on the basis of proved fitness is certainly better than dependence on party patronage. Still, even from the standpoint of efficiency, the rigid and sometimes artificial tests by which civil servants are often selected are likely to exclude the factors that will promote democracy in administration; and the safeguards against discrimination and arbitrary firing, while understandable in times when government service offers security as its chief material reward, would not be so emphasized as to stand in the way of efficiency if government salaries were made more adequate and if there were always opportunity in private employment.

Moreover, civil service reformers have apparently believed sound administration would be assured if officials were honest and technically competent. Yet they have been worried by the contrast between the morale that

exists in many a progressive business establishment and the frequent lack of *esprit de corps* in a government bureau. Some of the advanced methods of personnel management in private business stress honesty and competence merely as a beginning. An administrative agency in a democracy must seek to infuse not only an *esprit de corps* in its own ranks—a sense of participation in an exciting and creative enterprise—but a wider spirit of public participation in community activity.

The methods used to select and promote administrative officials, from the lowliest stenographer to department heads, must be consciously adapted to the development of a more vital democracy.

*The place of the expert* in public administration is a particularly difficult one. On the one hand the manifold tasks imposed on modern governments are increasingly technical. On the other hand the technical expert is peculiarly subject to arrogance and irresponsibility, feeling that the decisions he makes are far beyond the intelligence of the common man. The cult of a technical elite is, in fact, one of the ingredients of the fascist scorn for democracy.

The problem of the role of the expert in legislation is simpler, for there the expert can be called in by a legislative committee for a specific and temporary job. But in continuing administration the expert's place is not so easily defined. Perhaps one answer may be that in the training and selection of experts one of the tests of expertness be an understanding of the technology of democracy, and a commitment to the democratic spirit.

Another method that has perhaps been most widely

tried in Russia, though in a somewhat different context, is to provide a political mentor—a party commissar—alongside each expert as a check upon him. The same end, perhaps, is sought in this country by the retention of political appointment over the heads of administrative departments while all subordinate officials are selected on the basis of technical training. But both of these seem to be makeshifts.

Still another device is to provide departments with a board of experts in an advisory capacity: so a Public Health Council may be set up alongside a State Department of Health, or a Highway Safety Commission to advise a Highway Commissioner. Assurance of disinterested service on the part of such advisory groups is sometimes sought by requiring that they perform their functions without salary, being paid only for actual expenses incurred. In this way it is often possible to secure the services of the highest experts in the field, men or women who would hesitate to accept full-time employment at the small salaries usual in public employment. At the same time such advisory bodies provide a direct link between public administration and the public. Yet the usual method of selecting these “experts,” by more or less arbitrary executive choice, means a lack of definite responsibility. In part this can be overcome by requiring that the executive accept the nomination of some official or unofficial organization in that field of expertness—as, for instance, the Bar Association or the Medical Society or organized labor—but a regularized procedure needs to be worked out.

*The public corporation* may provide a clue to the

problem of combining expertness and responsibility, as well as to other problems of public administration. The private corporation, which has been hammered out as a procedure in the hard competition of the market place, may be taken as a useful model. In the private corporation there is centralized administrative direction in the hands of a president or general manager, responsible to a Board of Directors, who are supposed to be experts determining policy; and the Directors in turn are responsible, in theory, to the stockholders or owners of the enterprise. The same method can be used in a corporation owned in whole or in part by the government, with the government acting for the public, and appointing a Board of Directors, who in turn appoint the management.

Variants of this pattern are to be found in all countries and at all levels of government. In this country federal organizations of this general type include the R.F.C., the T.V.A., the Commodity Credit Corporation, and many others. The state universities are an example at the state level, and municipal power companies at the local level.

The public corporation is undoubtedly an efficient institutional device. It is particularly well adapted to the growing field of publicly owned and operated enterprises. Whether it can overcome the chief objections to the private corporation—lack of internal democracy and of responsibility to the public—remains to be seen.

Perhaps its greatest validity lies in its combination of centralized administrative direction with responsibility to a board of experts, the members of which, while they

usually are and should be compensated, need not devote full time to their duties. When several individuals, comprising a board or commission, share administrative power, confusion is likely to result, and where a single executive is in control too much depends on his individual qualities. But where a combination of the two is in effect, means should be sought by which the board can be representative of all the interests involved (as in the case of advisory bodies, mentioned above), rather than merely dependent on the judgment of the executive who appoints it.

*The lobby* is the chief device by which organized interests have been seeking recognition, especially in the legislative process. Though much maligned, the lobby is an important democratic instrument. It permits the representation of interest groups. If our society is not to be wholly totalitarianized it is desirable that there should be as large a number of focal points in the social structure as possible. In so far as lobbies have the unfortunate effect of subordinating the general interest to special interests, the remedy is to find better means of expressing the general interest, not in suppressing the special interests. In so far as lobbies have used improper means of pressure—winning and dining, cajoling and threatening—the remedy is to provide proper methods of making themselves felt.

As a matter of fact, the pressure groups are receiving increasing official recognition. Boards and commissions are selected on the nomination of manufacturers' associations and labor unions, professional associations and patriotic societies. Perhaps we are moving toward the



functional representation or industrial parliament recommended alike by the proponents of guild socialism and syndicalism, the Catholic church and the corporative state.

Despite the appropriation of the corporative idea by the Fascists, and their manipulation of it for purposes of tyranny, it can likewise be a logical extension of the idea of representative democracy.

*Due process* is a term most often used by American constitutional lawyers to impede the extension of administrative management. Many a necessary step in social integration was delayed if not prevented by the invocation of the Fifth or Fourteenth Amendment to our Constitution, until liberals became convinced it was the last resort of reaction rather than a safeguard of freedom. But with the abolition of anything like due process in the manipulation of lives and property in large parts of the world it is once more seen as an essential feature of the relation of free men to their government.

With the growth of administrative functions in the last few years, there has been a considerable clarification of what constitutes due process in administrative procedure. The public hearing before promulgation of any rules or regulations by an administrative agency is coming to be considered indispensable to the validity of the delegation of legislative power involved. The referendum in the case of major decisions affecting an interest group, such as the imposition of marketing quotas in some agricultural crop, is becoming more widespread, and it has its counterpart in the elections held by labor

relations boards to determine collective bargaining agencies. Individuals affected by administrative decisions are protected by carefully defined rights of hearing and judicial appeal; the appeal is usually limited, however, to matters of law, and to the existence of adequate evidence on which to base a decision, and does not go into matters of administrative discretion in which the administrator is held to have special technical competence.

A new constitutional law for the guidance of a democracy in the administrative process is, indeed, being evolved. But it should be noted that this is largely a negative aspect of democratic administration, guarding against arbitrary abuses. As a positive technique for increasing the active participation of all those affected, it has little relevance.

One other important method of guarding against administrative abuses arises from the constitutional power of the legislature to investigate. Investigations by a legislative committee, though subject in their turn to abuse, are one of the most important devices for maintaining the level of administration. It is only necessary to think how impossible such a technique would be in a totalitarian regime to realize how important it is to a democracy.

*Decentralization* is the last of the democratic administrative techniques that will be discussed here. The dispersal of power may be as important for the survival of freedom in organization as the separation of powers.

Breaking down administration into manageable units is a matter of efficiency as well as of freedom. Gigantism is a disease of private enterprise as it is of public admini-

stration. Modern scientific management is discovering new efficiencies in the small plant, in the distribution of authority, in reducing the administrative task to the limitations of normal human beings.

But it is chiefly for its importance to democracy that the question of decentralization is raised here. Our federal system, with forty-eight states retaining areas of sovereignty, has delayed social progress in many fields, but it has made more sure that that progress would not end in tyranny. The traditional methods of local government, by town and county, have not always worked well, but they have provided a further scattering of authority which has given American democracy a vitality lacking in the centralized structure of the French Third Republic.

There has been much complaint of the costliness and clumsiness of multiplying governmental units in this country: school districts, fire districts, zoning districts, villages, boroughs, towns, cities, all with power to tax and legislate and administer, have been superimposed on the older governmental units with little pattern or plan. As federal and state action have grown, new regions and districts have criss-crossed the old lines. Yet most of the new functions have been necessary and desirable, and the loss in efficiency is usually more than compensated by the assurance against concentration of authority. There can be no greater safeguard against totalitarianism than this over-lapping of the geographical limits of authority, with officials jealous of their power, yet necessarily restricted to their own carefully defined functions.

Reorganization of administrative agencies to provide better integration and simpler, more economical, operation, is necessary from time to time, but it should never be at the expense of a wide distribution of authority. Concentrated power is always dangerous. The greater the number of people who have a share of power, the closer the approach to real government by the people. In time perhaps the distinction between the public official and the private citizen will break down, as virtually every citizen will have some public authority.

#### *V. Democratic Techniques in Business*

How is democracy going to be infused into the daily job, now that the opportunity for rugged individualism has become a rare privilege?

A tremendous step forward has been taken with the acceptance of trade unionism as a normal procedure. Equality of bargaining power between the big corporation and the powerful labor union has restored something like the relationship between the individual enterprise and the hired man; the hired man could move on to another job or to free land if he didn't like his employment. The worker protected by a union need not cringe before his boss, and a new social and political equality becomes possible for him.

There is still a large school of thought, owing much to Marxism, which sees the labor movement as the means of achieving a democratic socialism, either via revolution and dictatorship or by gradual means. Yet the tendency has been for unions, once strongly established, to become a vested interest within the status quo. Undoubtedly

the labor movement is a major feature of the development of a wider social democracy. But by itself it has little bearing on the achievement of a new economic system or a new social order.

Thanks to their own strength and to the help of political leadership that was both dependent on their votes and motivated by a progressive social philosophy, the unions have won the battle for collective bargaining. Only mopping up operations remain. The question now is, how will strong and publicly recognized unions further promote democracy?

For the most part unions have shied away from participation in management, leadership of the "business unionism" type being wholly uninterested in assuming responsibility, while radical leadership feared the growth of "class collaboration." There are notable exceptions, however. The current nationwide campaign, planned by the International Ladies Garment Workers Union, to promote the American dress industry, follows a unique tradition in the clothing trade, where strong workers' organizations have taken the initiative away from weak employers in planning the development of the industry.

The problem is, once again, as in the case of public administrative agencies, a problem in the relation of the expert to all those affected by his decisions. Every business or industrial unit, office or factory, requires a high degree of discipline and division of function, and the tendency of management has been to treat the worker as a piece of machinery. Even thorough unionization and collective bargaining may leave this situation untouched.

The promise of economic democracy on the job seems to lie in the direction in which the science of management has been developing in recent years. The goal of this type of management is the full participation of each individual in the enterprise, to the limit of his capacity. This makes no distinction, except as to function and consequent reward, between the top executive and the humblest sweeper. It is a matter, in part, of attitude: the sense of participation, the feeling of personal significance, the emotion of loyalty to a common undertaking. But it is also, and necessarily, a matter of techniques, by which that attitude can be fostered and be an expression of reality rather than a spurious make-believe. These techniques are dependent in only a very limited degree on whether the enterprise is privately or publicly owned, or exists in a predominantly socialist or predominantly capitalist environment.

The emphasis on the cleavage between boss and worker that has been inevitable during the early period of the labor movement has made it difficult for the labor union to approach the problem as one of democratic techniques in scientific management. But there are signs of such a trend.\*

Another obstacle in the way of the fulfillment of the union's role is the lack of democracy within unions. This likewise is part of the heritage of the fighting days when unions could only survive if they had virtually military

\* The clearest and most significant exposition of this trend is in "Organized Labor and Production" by Morris L. Cooke and Philip Murray (1940), especially significant because Philip Murray is now head of the C.I.O.

discipline. But the way racketeering elements, business union dictators, and Communists are able to maintain their control over many unions highlights the tragedy of lack of union democracy. When a closed union wins a closed shop agreement the power in the hands of undemocratic union leadership, under a union constitution that is manipulated to perpetuate that leadership, is virtually absolute; by being able to deprive a man of employment the leader of the union can become an arbitrary and tyrannical despot. There is no greater need in the labor movement today, both in the A.F. of L. and the C.I.O., than a movement to extend the principles of responsible and representative constitutional government to the unions themselves. Though the worst abuses are limited to a few unions, an outraged public opinion is sooner or later going to impose public supervision on all unions, if the labor movement does not itself take the initiative in reform.

So much emphasis is put here on unions because it seems almost a matter of course that the principal techniques of economic democracy on the job depend on the unions. But there are certain techniques of management that have been developed in the absence of unions (though sometimes with the use of "company unions") that may be valid, particularly those mentioned above in connection with public administration.

In addition, the whole coöperative movement opens up techniques for the participation of producers and consumers in the industrial process. On the one hand producers' and marketing coöperatives permit the individual producer to bargain collectively on an equality

with powerful corporations, and also give a varying opportunity to participate in the management process. And on the other hand consumers' coöperatives do the same for consumers. When coöperative retail stores set up their own wholesale suppliers, and these in turn go into production in certain lines, the whole productive and distributive process is put under the control of a group which by its very nature cannot become exclusive or arbitrary. And the semi-religious fervor which many "coöperators" develop indicates the extent to which genuine participation in economic activity can give new zest to life—which is of the essence of democracy.

One advantage which the coöperative movement has over the labor movement is that its early crystallization in the formulas of the Rochdale weavers has tended to prevent the appearance of a new set of bosses.

Though some of the enthusiasts of the coöperative movement have seen it as the whole answer to the problem of economic democracy, the sobering events of the last few years have brought a more realistic appreciation of the proper relation of the coöperative movement to other democratic techniques, particularly the government itself.

Neither the labor union nor the coöperative nor any other device for democratic management of the business or industrial unit has a very direct relation to the problem of democratic management of the economic system as a whole. With the breakdown of the unconscious automatic mechanism of the *laissez faire* and free trade market, a conscious and integrated control is essential.



The great depression beginning in 1929 gave impetus to the process by which governments sought to control the economic system as a whole by collective or public action. The degeneration of Russian Communism into totalitarianism and the rise of Fascism and Nazism demonstrated the dangers in a centralized merger of political and economic power, and the need for democratic methods of economic planning and control. The war accentuated the urgency of finding these methods if the democracies were not to become totalitarian while fighting totalitarianism.

The answer seems to lie in two directions: first in finding devices of control that will resemble the free market in their automatism; second in applying the principles of representative democracy to those agencies of control that must depend on conscious decision.

The maintenance of full employment seems to be the major task of overall economic management. The use of central economic planning to accomplish this has lost its appeal, since Stalin, its great exponent, became ever more dictatorial. Practice as well as theory seems to be developing monetary control as the method. Though Keynes and his school have tended to stress the maintenance of the volume of investment, through manipulation of the interest rate, public spending and government fiscal policies, it is getting to be recognized that the volume of investment is only an aspect of the more inclusive problem of maintaining the volume of total consumer expenditure.\*

\* See John H. G. Pierson, "Full Employment" (1941).

In so far as decisions on the rate of interest, taxes, social dividends, public works and the like do not flow automatically from statistics on the volume of employment, prices and other indices, new public agencies, exercising vast discretionary powers, are necessary. The powers possessed by some of the agencies for carrying through the defense program in Washington stagger the imagination. So far they have been set up as temporary emergency agencies, subject to check by responsible executive and legislative authorities. But we are in no mere temporary emergency. Moreover, the natural tendency everywhere is for administrative agencies to look on the representatives of the people as a nuisance. A new constitutional structure for our economic government must be devised, based on the same principles of representation and responsibility that have proved their validity in political government.

The natural method of representation, as suggested above in discussing the lobby, is by means of the organized interest group. And the trend already in evidence is towards a democratic integration of trade associations and labor unions, cartels, farmers' associations and consumer coöperatives, industry councils and economic parliaments, sharing in economic decisions through public agencies in which they are represented. If this suggests a bewildering complexity of the lines of power in a modern society, let it be remembered that the totalitarian regimes are no less bewildering in the complexity of their institutional structure, yet by bringing all the lines of power to a single simple nucleus, they have given human beings power no human beings can stand.

## VI. *Democracy and World Peace*

Democratic techniques must be found for supranational government and world integration, if democracy is to survive. For the totalitarians have their "new orders" of continental, regional and world proportions. And the old disorganized world of sovereign national states must in the long run prove fatal to democracy.

Modern science has made war so destructive as to make impossible the maintenance of an environment favorable to democracy. Democratic states are at a fatal disadvantage in playing the game of power politics. Moreover, the fanatical nationalism which alone permits a country to survive in the present world of competing great powers is necessarily exclusive and therefore incompatible with the democratic idea: the superiority of the German race must be met by a counter faith on the part of the Anglo-Saxon nations and a belief that the Germans are a sub-human race, not truly civilized.

Democracy and nationalism have in fact become mutually contradictory. The Nazis are merely the most blatant expression of that fact. Some kind of organization by larger units than national states is inevitable. The totalitarians have a great initial advantage so long as force, rather than consent, remains the method of organization. It may be that the democratic national state will disappear and that the Nazis will organize the world. In that case ultimate hope may lie in the fact that techniques of management relying on arbitrary force will not work, and that democratic techniques will take their place by natural evolutionary pressures. But it is

obviously preferable that at least part of the new supranational integration be undertaken by the democracies, if only so that all that has been learned about democratic procedures will not be forgotten and have to be relearned.

Supranational or world government involves no completely new problems. In both its political and economic aspects the techniques necessary to achieve integration will be similar to those required on the lower levels. Of course, the problems are larger and in some respects more complex. But since any supranational integration on a democratic basis requires use of the federal method, and the units to be federated are mostly in existence already, the task may be less difficult than the devising of democratic techniques at lower levels. Thus the International Postal Union became an efficient and responsible agency of supranational government years ago, while the introduction of democratic methods of administration within our own postal system is still only in its infancy. Similarly the International Labor Office is perhaps a more enlightened instance of democracy in action than our own Department of Labor.

What is needed is the will to proceed along fairly obvious lines. If the war develops favorably for Britain and America the desire for the formulation of instruments of international government as war aims will grow. The popularity of the Streit plan for federal union of the democracies is encouraging, though Streit's concentration on the limited techniques of traditional political democracy as expressed in our own federal constitution may lead some people to ignore the other and

newer techniques, particularly for overall economic management, which may in practice be more important.

Perhaps defeat at the hands of the totalitarians, with their dynamic drive to a "new order," can be avoided only by taking the offensive for a new democratic world order ourselves. The enslaved people of Europe are unlikely to be roused by Britain to revolt against Nazi domination so long as Britain keeps India, of equal size and population with continental Europe, in subjection. The war is likely to degenerate into a more and more brutal and bestial struggle for sheer survival unless believers in democracy can transform it into a struggle for liberation, not in terms of an impossible past, but of the future. This is partly a matter of spirit and will. But it is also a matter of applied intelligence. The formulation of adequate techniques for a free world may be one of the essential preludes to victory.

### VII. *The Democratic Way of Life*

For persons brought up under favorable circumstances in a democracy it is hard to conceive of civilized or tolerable existence without democracy. Yet there are millions of people, even in America, to whom the advantages of democracy are not so immediately apparent. A vote on election day and freedom to express contempt of politicians may seem less important, even to those who can enjoy them—millions of Negroes cannot—than economic security and a good job. And the habit of taking orders from the boss at one's place of work has accustomed millions of Americans to dictatorship.

If democracy is to come through this time of testing

it will have to be as a "way of life" rather than a form of government. The time of testing may be longer than we expect. The decision may not be reached this year or next year or even in the next ten years. The totalitarian technique of social collective action has great immediate advantages. And so long as it is confronted with an alternative system as imperfect as our democracy it may win at least a temporary victory.

If the democratic idea is to permeate our whole lives, as the totalitarian idea permeates the lives of its victims, it must do more than solve the technical problems I have discussed here. There are democratic techniques to be devised and learned and practiced in the home and family no less than in the community of nations, in the school and church and neighborhood no less than in the place of business.

Whatever one may think of the theology and intellectual level of the Buchmanites much of the emphasis in their "Moral Rearmament" campaign on personal human relations, as the starting point for national defense in a democracy, is sound. In one's daily and hourly contact with other individuals one is more or less successful in practicing the democratic "way of life." For one is giving more or less recognition to the worth and value and dignity of the individual human personality.

Would it be possible to infuse a whole neighborhood, a whole community, with the spirit of joint participation in a common enterprise, so as to lift even the daily chores to a new level of significance? The "utopian" communities like Brook Farm and the rest attempted this by isolating themselves from the real world outside—and

made a long record of failure. Perhaps the "Social Unit Plan" \* with its techniques for individual participation in neighborhood activities on the most universal level—buying milk and groceries, caring for health, family and social life—but as an integral part of the surrounding community, may be the answer.

The social organism is so big and so complex that the great majority of people will feel crushed into insignificance within it unless they can share in its decisions on the level of their own competence. The cult of the Leader is a consequence of frustration, with the helpless individual winning a sense of significance by proxy, as he identifies himself with the Leader. The traditional devices of democracy, with their special expression on Election Day, were adequate in a day of individual enterprise, when a man could find creative expression of his personality in his job. But they are not adequate today.

The technological revolution, with its invention of a million new devices for comfort and material well-being, has opened up the potentialities of a brave new world. But if it is to be a world of free human beings and not conditioned automatons all our inventive genius must go into the devising of new institutional procedures. These must not only perform the necessary collective functions but give expression to individual personality.

\* See "Adventuring for Democracy" by Wilbur C. Phillips (1940).

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# Communism and the American Intellectuals

BY GRANVILLE HICKS

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THE past ten years of my life divide into four years as a fellow-traveler of the Communist party, four years as a member, and two years as an ex-member. I have seen how the party looks when one is moving towards it, when one is in it, and when one is going away from it. I have tried during the past two years to look back without bitterness and learn what I could. And what I have learned may not be without significance, since the story of Communism in the 'thirties is an integral part of the intellectual history of America.

## I. *The Strength of Communism*

In 1930 and 1931, when my contemporaries began to feel the crumbling of the bases of American life, there was nothing very prepossessing about the Communist party. After a series of factional battles, its membership was reduced to fifteen thousand. Its leaders, though they had managed to triumph over their rivals, had been charged by Stalin with reformism, unprin-



cipled factionalism, and rotten intrigue. Its press was insignificant, its propaganda clumsy. And yet in 1932 the Communist party had the support of dozens of writers and artists in its election campaign, and from that time on it built itself a larger and larger following both in the labor movement and among the middle classes.

The October Revolution meant little to the majority of Americans, except that "Bolshevik" began to relieve "Hun" as a swear word, but for a certain number of radicals it was the brightening of hope after the gloom of the war. By 1919 some of the supporters of the Bolsheviks were already critical of their methods, but it was easy for the enthusiasts to brush aside the wisdom of a Rosa Luxemburg as well as the captiousness of an Emma Goldman. With typical pragmatic finality, Lincoln Steffens said, "I have seen the Future, and it works."

The world revolution, however, failed to develop. Lenin adopted the New Economic Policy, which at best was unromantic, and in this country Coolidge prosperity began. We, who were in the twenties when the century was, thought of Soviet Russia as remote, mysterious, and irrelevant. In a vague way we wished it well, while deploring the excesses of the revolution, but we did not think it had anything to teach us, for our problem was a capitalism that was all too successful. If we thought it desirable to change the economic system—and I imagine the majority of us would have described ourselves as socialists—we did not think it necessary or even possible. Steffens, though so much older than we,

again seems a representative figure. He still held that Russian Communism worked, but so did Italian fascism and American capitalism, and there was no arguing with what worked.

I need not describe the shock of the depression. The question is why, when that shock came, we began talking about Communism, why, for instance, so many of us decided so readily that the Socialist Party was not worth our consideration. John Dos Passos wrote in the *Modern Quarterly*:\* "Becoming a Socialist right now would have just about the same effect on anybody as drinking a bottle of near-beer." And Sherwood Anderson said, "The artist would also like to think of himself as ready to die for what he believes." It is obvious that socialism during the twenties had become identified with the ministerial earnestness of Norman Thomas, and that we felt the crisis called for more than hopeful reasonableness. It could not touch our imaginations, and that in turn helps to explain why it did not touch the imaginations of the American people during the 'thirties.

If socialism was not the answer to our problems, then we had to ask ourselves whether Communism might be. So—a little furtively, a little frightened of what we were letting ourselves in for—we snooped around the edges of the Communist Party and talked with each other about Marx and Lenin and whether violent revolution was or was not justified. Occasionally we got hold of a *bona fide* Communist, and were relieved to find him so much pleasanter and more reasonable than

\* "Whither the American Writer," *Modern Quarterly*, Summer, 1932.

we had expected. Nevertheless, the party still seemed a little gruesome, and when Edmund Wilson suggested taking Communism away from the Communists, we approved.

We knew that, in spite of his suggestion, Wilson was steadily drawing closer to the party, and therefore it seemed stupid for the Communists to attack his article so violently. But the attack, instead of alienating Wilson, brought him into a more active alliance. That was what we couldn't get away from—the intransigence of the Communists. They would march down to city hall, chanting their preposterous and hackneyed slogans, engage in battle with the police, and end up with some bloodshed and a lot of publicity. We were not sure of the value of such tactics, but we could not laugh at a cause for which men were willing to get their skulls cracked. Like William Lloyd Garrison, they would speak out and they would be heard.

It is hard now to remember the helplessness of the government, the leaders of opinion, and the men of good will in the second and third years of the depression, but it is only against this background of paralysis that the appeal of the Communists can be understood. Once more Steffens summed up our attitude. "I had come," he wrote to a friend, "to regard the New Capitalism as an experiment till, in 1929, the whole thing went over the top and slid down to an utter collapse. That was clear to all. I went to New York to hear the semi-scientific captains of industry say in words and facial expressions that they did not know what had happened or what was to be done about it. They did not under-

stand their own experiment. Then—not till then—did I give up, and turned to see what else there was.” “Nobody in the world,” he said, “proposes anything basic and real except the Communists.”

Compared with the crazy remedies that were talked about in the early years of the depression, the Communist proposals did indeed seem basic and real. The Communists wanted not merely to end this depression but to get rid of the system of exploitation that was at the root of all depressions. Their strength, in fact, was fourfold: they had a program of action, a disciplined organization, a body of doctrine, and a working model—the USSR. Each of these was a factor in their appeal to the intellectuals and must therefore be examined.

The party’s official program in 1932 can be found in *Culture and the Crisis*, the pamphlet issued by the League of Professional Groups for Foster and Ford—of which four contributors to this volume were members—and in W. Z. Foster’s *Toward Soviet America*. Mr. Foster did not hide behind euphemisms: he called for the overthrow of capitalism “in open struggle by the toiling masses, led by the proletariat.” “It is a crime,” he wrote, “to teach the workers that they can defeat such a ruthless capitalist class without open struggle.” He did not deny that the workers were not ready for such a struggle, but the deepening of the depression and the party’s agitation for its immediate demands would educate them. Thus educated, the workers would form soviets and a Red Guard. With a victorious revolution the soviets would establish the dictatorship of the proletariat. “Under the dictatorship

all the capitalist parties—Republican, Democratic, Progressive, Socialist, etc.—will be abolished, the Communist party functioning alone as the party of the toiling masses.” The establishment of a soviet government would, he promised, “mark the birth of real democracy in the United States,” and all the advantages of socialism, including self-determination for the Black Belt, would follow.

Even by 1935 this program had become preposterous, both as propaganda for Americans and as a conceivable outline of the future course of American history. What did we think of it in 1932? Unless I am quite mistaken, we regarded Foster’s book as doctrinaire, impossible, even absurd, for we saw that the Russian revolution was not going to repeat itself step by step in America. And yet, with capitalism collapsing all around us, and with the capitalists fighting so bitterly to hold on to their profits and privileges, we could not dispute his fundamental contentions. We agreed that socialism was necessary, that the capitalists would not voluntarily give up their power, and that the proletariat must make the revolution. The revolution would come, and when it came, we thought, the party would adjust itself to American realities. In the meantime, though we were conscious of the shortcomings of the party, we saw that it was acting and acting in what we recognized as the right direction.

I have said that we were conscious of the shortcomings of the party. Most of us, as a matter of fact, knew little about it, but what we knew was often enough disturbing. Many of the Communists we met seemed

cruel, fanatical, and in any ordinary sense untrustworthy. We talked about this among ourselves, agreed that we could not approve, and decided that it did not matter. A friend of mine, writing to me in the summer of 1932, explained why:

It is a bad world in which we live, and so even the revolutionary movement is anything but what (poetically and philosophically speaking) it "ought" to be: God knows, I realize this, as you do, and God knows it makes my heart sick at times: from one angle, it seems nothing but grime and stink and sweat and obscene noises and the language of the beasts. But surely this is what *history* is. It just is not made by gentlemen and scholars, and "made" only in the bad sense by the Norman Thomases and the Devere Allens and the John Deweys. Lenin must have been (from a conceivable point of view) a dreadful man; so must John Brown, and Cromwell, and Marat, and Stenka Razin, and Mahomet, and all the others who have destroyed and built up. So will our contemporaries in the American movement be. I believe we can spare ourselves a great deal of pain and disenchantment and even worse (treachery to ourselves) if we discipline ourselves to accept proletarian and revolutionary leaders and even theorists for what they are and must be: grim fighters in about the most dreadful and desperate struggle in all history—not reasonable and "critically-minded" and forbearing and infinitely far-seeing men. My fundamental conviction about the whole thing, at this stage, is that everything gives way before the terrible social conflict itself: that the power of imperialism must be fought at every turn at every moment with any weapon and without quarter; that the consciousness of the proletariat—its sense of power and its anger—must be built up by every possible device; and that, meanwhile, the kinds of things we are interested in must take their place, where they belong, out of the thickest dust and along the rim of the arena. Let's salvage as much as we can of the rather abstract things we care for, but, golly, let's realize that there are far more basic and primitive things that have to be taken care of first (as long as men are starving and exploited), and do absolutely nothing, at any moment, to impede the work of the men who are fighting what is really our battle *for us*.

Few of us could have matched that eloquence, but most of us would have approved. We were not in a position at this time to estimate the intelligence of American Communists; what troubled us was the absence of the bourgeois virtues. But the bourgeoisie also lacked these virtues: the defenders of the *status quo* were powerful and ruthless, and we did not think they could be combatted with sweetness and light. We remembered the picture John Reed had drawn of the Bolsheviks in *Ten Days That Shook the World*—hard, merciless fighters, courageous, selfless, and cruel—and we agreed that American Communists had to be like them. We were not, we knew well enough, fit to be Bolsheviks; if they did not have our virtues, we did not have theirs; and our virtues, we were forced to recognize, did not make revolutions.

Yet even our sense of the desperateness of the American crisis, and our belief that the vices of American Communists were the necessary vices of true revolutionists, would not have brought us to support the Communist party if that party had not managed to convince us of its custodianship of Marxist truth. Some of us had read Marx before 1929, but the majority shared the ignorance of American college graduates in general. What we knew of Marx we knew at second hand, and usually through the writings of men we were beginning to condemn as revisionists and reformers. We began to read Marx's *Capital* and *The Eighteenth Brumaire*, Engels' *Socialism, Scientific and Utopian*, Lenin's *Imperialism* and *The State and Revolution*. What we found was an explanation not merely of what was at the

moment happening in America but also of what had happened in the past. Thus we were directly influenced as intellectuals, and all our interests were given a common center.

I have written elsewhere \* on what seem to me to have been the weaknesses of Marxist criticism, and I shall have something to say later on about Marxist theory, but I do not doubt that the contact of critical thought with historical materialism was in many ways fruitful. What is important now, however, for the purposes of our analysis, is merely the fact that writing people were attracted to the party by what it taught as well as by what it did. We did not understand the fine points of Marxist doctrine over which the party fought with the Trotskyites and other factions, and we were not interested in them. It was enough for us to believe that Marxism was in general right and that the Communist Party was in general Marxist.

Marxist doctrine, as I have said, had its intellectual value for us; it also had, in a greater degree than we were likely to realize at the time, its emotional value. Just as the early Catholic Church insisted that Jesus was wholly God and wholly man, defying the heresies that would sacrifice any part of either nature to logic, so the Communist party, resisting fatalists and pragmatists alike, demanded violent action for an inevitable victory. Faith in the inevitability of socialism meant more to us, I think, than we would have willingly admitted. There is nothing more comforting, especially for minorities, than the belief that God is on your side,

\* "The Failure of Left Criticism," *New Republic*, Sept. 9, 1940.



and, sensitive as we were to the cruelties both of capitalism and of revolution, we needed comfort.

Of equal emotional value to us was the Marxian emphasis on the proletariat. One of the questions in the *Modern Quarterly* symposium to which I have alluded was, "Do you believe that becoming a communist deepens an artist's work?" The next question was, "Would not becoming a socialist have the same effect?" I replied: "Becoming a socialist means in effect an alliance with that bewildered and terrified class, the petty bourgeoisie. . . . Being a socialist—like being a liberal—means that the writer is not really thinking and feeling in terms of the class struggle, that he is really not allying himself with the proletariat." And Newton Arvin wrote, "It does not involve an abandonment of his class attitudes; in other words, a fundamental philosophical change." We were passionately eager to get away from our own class and find a home with the proletariat.

Behind these and similar replies was a long chapter of literary history—and of American experience. The writer has seldom been at ease under capitalism, and we who had been brought up on Thoreau and Whitman, on Mark Twain and Henry James, on Dreiser and Norris and Upton Sinclair, were not likely to have a deep affection for businessmen as such. Way back in the benighted 'twenties "bourgeois" had been a term of derogation, though its antonym then was "civilized," not "proletarian." We had always thought of businessmen as greedy, narrow-minded, gross, and now we saw them also as ruthless exploiters of labor and as the incompetent administrators of a productive system they

did not understand. Time and again American writers had turned from their own sterile class to find life and wisdom in plain farmers and factory workers. We flattered ourselves that we were less romantic than our predecessors, since we turned to the proletariat because Marx had pointed it out as the class that was destined to achieve socialism, but there was in our attitude more than a little of the old desire simply to get away from the bourgeoisie. No doubt we were naïve in accepting more or less at face value the Communist party's claim to be the vanguard of the proletariat, but there was no other group that could even make the claim, and the party did have its Harlan Counties and its hunger marches to point to.

Some of us were chiefly influenced by the organization and activity of the party, others by the philosophy of Marxism, others by the existence of the Soviet Union. Its tie with the Soviet Union was now, with the worldwide depression of capitalism, a tremendous asset to the party. Even the capitalist press carried more and more about what was happening in Russia, and the liberal weeklies were full of the discoveries of returning pilgrims. We read and we speculated, and not a few went and saw for themselves. One thing was admitted by everyone: there was no unemployment in Russia, whereas there were seventeen million unemployed in the United States. And that was because the Soviet Union had a planned economy and could not fall victim, as our country and the rest of the capitalist world did, to cyclical depressions of increasing violence. While our business men were trying to find out what had hit them, and

our productive resources were being wasted to the tune of tens of billions of dollars a year, Russia was laying out a plan for the next five years.

That was as far as most of us went: the Soviet Union showed that a planned economy would work. We didn't think that Russia was a utopia, but we were impressed with the Soviet experiment, and we wanted it to go on. If we thought the party leaders were wrong in expecting the American revolution to repeat in precise detail the Russian revolution, we nevertheless believed America had something to learn from Russia, and we felt the Communists were nearer right than those radicals who were constantly criticizing the Soviets. None of us regarded the USSR as his fatherland or took the party slogans with complete seriousness, but we thought it right that the Communist party in the United States should maintain close relationship with the Communist party in the Soviet Union. Stalin never touched our imagination, but Lenin did, and we believed in his revolution and his party.

As I have talked about "we," I have been thinking of some twenty persons I knew well in the early 'thirties, persons of about my age and about my interests. No two of us, of course, agreed on all points, but I think the composite picture I have given is fair. In 1932, as I have said, a number of us committed ourselves to support of the Communist party in the election campaign, but none of us was at that time, so far as I know, a member of the party. We had seen the collapse of an economic system, with resulting misery beyond anything we had believed possible in America. We had be-

come convinced of the necessity of a different system, and had looked around to see who was trying to achieve it. We had found the Communist party dedicated to the task and its members resolutely, self-sacrificingly engaged in it. We were reading Marx and thinking about Russia. With varying degrees of conviction and hopefulness we were ready to cooperate with the party. But membership was a different matter.

In the summer of 1932, reviewing the *Modern Quarterly* symposium, the *New Republic* said editorially:

In general the questionnaire seems to show that the "leftward swing" of American writers is a reality. Three years ago, these fifteen critics and novelists were classified either as liberals or else as men wholly uninterested in politics. Today, most of them distrust the Socialists for being too conservative, too much involved in the present system. The writers themselves believe that the system is doomed—but not tomorrow or within ten years. They sympathize with the Communists, but not to the extent of wishing to join the party. Their change of opinion seems to indicate that American literature is about to assume a different character. But it isn't true that all of them have simultaneously boarded the Red Express; the train in which they are traveling might better be described as a leftbound local.

I do not know whether the editorial writer was consciously echoing Lenin's famous remark about the locomotive of history, but the editorial might have been recalled seven years later when Lenin's phrase was so often quoted. It was the leftbound local we were taking, and it made a good many stops.

## II. *The United Front*

The high enthusiasm of the election campaign of 1932 rapidly declined. The first acts of the Roosevelt admin-

istration, though criticized by the Left as inadequate, reduced the sense of pressure, of the immediacy of collapse. The depression was not over, but the crisis was.

The persons who foreswore their allegiance to Communism in 1933 and 1934, however, did not as a rule embrace the New Deal: either they abandoned politics altogether or they turned to some other Marxist faction. It was as if, with the diminution of pressure, they could permit critical faculties to function again, and petty quibbling and mere vanity were involved as well as what we must now recognize as sound judgment. Some intellectuals, on the other hand, following an equally complicated and obscure emotional pattern, remained loyal, and these drew closer to the party.

If tension decreased in America after Roosevelt's inauguration, the triumph of fascism in Germany kept us from any sense of security. Fascism, according to the thirteenth plenum of the Executive Committee of the Communist International, was "the open terrorist dictatorship of the most reactionary, most chauvinistic, and most imperialistic elements of finance capitalism." We fellow-travelers accepted that definition, for we knew that Hitler could not have come to power without the direct support of German monopolists and the encouragement of British and American financiers. And I think that in 1933 we were largely right, though we failed to understand the laws of fascist development.

Fascism so violently dramatized everything we hated, it so completely expressed the barbarism that we had found implicit in a decadent capitalism, it was so horrifying and immediate a menace, that most of us felt a

renewed loyalty to the revolutionary cause. That capitalism could evolve into fascism was the final demonstration that it must be abolished. And we thought it no accident that Hitler had struck first against the Communists, for they had been his most militant enemies. Indeed, we fellow-travelers believed the Communists when they claimed to be the only effective fighters against the fascist threat.

But increasingly it seemed to us that, as the character of the struggle had changed, new methods must be found for the new phase. There was more and more talk about an alliance of all anti-fascist forces, but nothing happened because of a debate, which appeared to us almost medieval in its subtlety, about the "belowness" or the "aboveness" of the united front. The Communists, in fact, took the occasion of the destruction of both parties in Germany to renew their attack on socialism as the chief enemy of the working class. I believed—most of the time at least—that the socialists were objectively social-fascists, but I never doubted that they were anti-fascist in intention, and I was sure that the name-calling did no good and much harm.

On February 16, 1934, the Socialist party held a meeting in Madison Square Garden to protest the Dollfuss *putsch* in Austria. Communists marched in a body to the meeting, booed LaGuardia and Woll, who were on the platform, and created such a disturbance that the meeting ended in violence. By accident I heard the riot over the radio and was heartsick at the discrediting of the whole revolutionary cause. But what was I to do? By this time I was an editor of the *New Masses* and

close enough to the party to speak out in party circles, but it was obviously a question whether pressure from outside would not be more effective than pressure from inside—which seemed to get nowhere, though many members privately agreed with me. The dilemma was sharpened because an open letter of protest was sent to the party, and two or three persons who stood in about the same relationship to the party as I did signed it. At least half of the signers, however, were, or were on their way to becoming, Trotskyites, though they represented themselves as injured well-wishers, and several of the others had repeatedly shown themselves indifferent or hostile. I thought and still think that, however honest certain of the signers were, the letter itself was a device to discredit the party. Public criticism, then, could only aid those whose faults seemed to me much worse than the party's, and I had to content myself with private protest. It was not the first or the last time that I had this choice to make.

I have given a false impression if I have not suggested that I myself was intensely sectarian in this period, not so sectarian, of course, as the official party line, but dogmatically convinced that salvation lay solely with the Communist party. I think it unlikely, however, that I should have joined the party if it had not changed: I might have remained a fellow-traveler or I might not, but I should not have become a member. The change did not come quite so suddenly as is usually supposed. Long before the seventh congress of the Communist International in August, 1935, Communists in this country were feeling their way toward new

attitudes. John Dos Passos, defending his signing of the letter of protest, spoke of his "growing conviction that only a drastic change of policy and of mentality can save the radical movement in this country from the disastrous defeats suffered in Italy, Germany, Austria, and Spain." Fellow-travelers and even party members shared that conviction, and it seemed to me that there was less and less of what Dos Passos described as "unintelligent fanaticism."

That is why I and others like me did not doubt the sincerity of the transformation that took place at the seventh congress. Naïve as we probably were, we might have doubted it if we had not seen so clearly that circumstances demanded the change and that the American party was overripe for it. The International, we thought, had at last learned the lesson of the rise of fascism, and we were glad. The new line fitted our conception of the international situation by recognizing fascism as the chief enemy. At home it permitted us to cooperate with the insurgent forces in the labor movement and the progressives in the New Deal. It was what we wanted, and it seemed to us a great step ahead for the revolutionary movement.

Now the change that had been slowly going on in the party became rapid. The superficial manifestations were often amusing, and we laughed at the way some of the ardent comrades hastened to equip themselves with marriage certificates, conventional clothes, and a new vocabulary. As Max Lerner observed, the Communists, having always been extremists, were now becoming extremely moderate. But the change went be-



low the surface, not only because the new line brought in new members but also because it released qualities in the old members that had been suppressed. Veterans of all the factional fights, who had read nothing but the Marxist classics and the *Daily Worker*, dutifully began to read American history and literature, and were surprised to find that they were learning something. Some of the older comrades were disgruntled, but most of them were glad to relax and be human, and it was a surprise to themselves as well as to others to discover how human they could be. Mother Bloor, at a birthday party in her honor, is reported to have said, "Thank God I have lived to see a little sentiment in the Communist party!"

Immediately our whole relationship to the party was changed. As I have said, we knew that we were deficient in the Bolshevik virtues, and the party knew it too and did not encourage us to join. But after the summer of 1935 the party wanted us, and wanted us for what we were, middle-class intellectuals. Of the score of intellectuals I have been thinking about as I wrote this narrative, perhaps half had been alienated from the party by this time. Most of the others became members within the next year or two.

We changed, too. Our sectarianism had always been both an intellectual and a temperamental strain, and we responded quickly to the new environment. I suppose now that the party leaders knew they would lose many of us when the next turn came, but that did not keep them from using us for all we were worth. I, for example, having received some newspaper publicity at

one time or another, was pushed forward as an example of the new type of Communist: soundly American, incurably middle-class, idealistic, given to correct grammar, kind to my family. And the farther away I got from the old sectarianism, the worse it seemed to me. Thus it happened that the book I wrote at this time, *I Like America*—the one book of mine, by the way, widely circulated by the party—contains only two or three pages, those dealing with the Soviet Union and with the party itself, that I could wish expunged. It is also true that I could not now achieve quite that note of optimism, but that is a different story, and I am not ashamed of having once been more hopeful than at present I can bring myself to be.

From 1935 to 1939 the party grew steadily, and even more in influence than in members. For what we did during this period I think we need not apologize: the building of the democratic front in support of Roosevelt, the creation and strengthening of white-collar unions, the work in the CIO, the boycott of Japan, the advocacy of collective security: there is not one of these things that I would not do again.

But I would not do them under the leadership of the Communist party, and that is the tragedy for all of us who were in the party or worked with it. We never suspected that by a dozen words Joseph Stalin could destroy everything we had done. We would have denied, of course, that Stalin would ever want to speak those words, and we did deny it, steadfastly, right down to the eve of the Soviet-Nazi pact. But we also would have denied that anything Stalin did could destroy the

achievements of our democratic front. And we were wrong.

Why were we so stupid? In particular, why did we not take warning from the Moscow trials? Here I can speak only for myself. My private view of the purges was that most of the men were guilty of the crimes with which they were charged, but I thought that their defections were evidence that something was wrong in the Soviet Union. That was the position around which I wavered, sometimes more convinced of the wrongness of the trials, sometimes less. But I subordinated the question of the guilt of the victims and the fairness of their treatment to another question. "If," I asked myself, "the worst that is claimed by the Trotskyites about these trials is true, what difference will it make to me?" And this was the answer I gave: "Even if the trials are complete frame-ups, it still remains true that Russia is on our side in the struggle against fascism. Moreover, the good work we are doing over here has no connection with what is happening in Moscow." This second point was for me much the more important. I went through plenty of bad moments during the trials, but I was determined not to let my distress interfere with my contributions to the democratic front. In fact, I was smug and superior towards those who had nothing better to do than to try to exonerate Trotsky while I was raising money for Spain and helping to build the labor movement. Thus I took the hurdle of the trials as I had taken that of the Madison Square Garden riot, never suspecting there would be a higher hurdle that would trip me up.

### III. *Who Were the Communists?*

During the four years that I was in the party I belonged to two branches, one an ordinary street branch, mostly proletarian, the other made up largely of professionals. I spoke at many party meetings, both open and closed. I knew many district and state organizers and scores of the rank and file. But I knew few of the national leaders, and none of them intimately. That was, by the way, the anomaly of my position: thanks to the newspapers, I was regarded by outsiders and even by many members as a leader, and on occasion the party itself put me forward as a spokesman, but actually I saw nothing of the inner workings of the leadership.

So far as I knew the leaders, I had no great respect for them, and, indeed, it seems to me now that on certain levels I underestimated their ability, simply because I attributed to them personally faults for which the responsibility lay elsewhere. But these faults, because they were not personal shortcomings, were more significant than I thought them to be. There was, for example, one functionary who always spoke with awe and mystery about what went on "over there" and what the people "over there" would think and say. I remember his telling me once about the great scolding that "Earl" had got "over there," because, as I recall it, he (i.e., Browder) had exaggerated the strength of the party in basic industries. I was merely amused by the impression the incident had made on my informant. It was the same way when, after I had praised Marx and Lenin in a review, a peculiarly objectionable minor official

wired me, "What about Uncle Joe?" I thought these men were narrow sectarians, amateur Machiavellis, and Russophiles. With unpardonable optimism I believed that either they would change under the impact of the new spirit in the party or they would be supplanted by leaders of a different type.

Looking back, with a less naïve conception of the leadership and its connections with the Soviet Union, I naturally find something sinister in the obeisances to Moscow and the idolizing of Stalin. I should have realized that these leaders were in fact agents of the Soviets, not because they accepted Moscow gold but because their theory of revolution required them to follow Stalin no matter what he did. Even now, however, I doubt if there was a Valtin or a Rubashov in the CPUSA, perhaps because these more sophisticated types of corruption grow more easily out of European than out of American soil. If the leaders were corrupt, it was in the American fashion of the minor political boss and the ward-heeler. And if they were corrupt, it was never, so far as I can see, for the grosser forms of political gain, for they were hard-working, underpaid, and self-sacrificing to the point of heroism.

My views of the leadership have changed, but not my views of the rank and file. Of the admirable persons I have known in my life, a considerable proportion belonged—and some still belong—to the Communist party. My experience may have been limited, but I have never seen a branch meeting that remotely resembled those ruthless conspiratorial sessions occasionally described for the Dies or the Rapp-Coudert com-

mittee. Maybe that is how we were supposed to behave, but in fact we didn't. The gathering of any branch I have ever known was almost as innocuous and as dull as a meeting of the Odd Fellows or the Parent-Teachers' Association. A typical agenda included such items as recruiting, work in the trade unions, the distribution of party literature, plans of action in various democratic front organizations, and educational discussion. There was always a passive majority—well-meaning persons whose energy had apparently been exhausted in signing membership cards—that sat back and said little, while the active minority made the decisions and subsequently carried them out.

It was in the active minority, of course, that I found the persons I admired. Human conduct is never simple, and I know that I cannot adequately explain their motives, but I have no doubt that they were primarily idealistic. During four years I brought my share of members into the Communist party, and I know the kind of appeal I tried to make. In the first place, the best prospects were men and women already active in labor unions or other organizations, for it was only out of what Arthur Koestler calls the generous half of humanity that one could hope to make recruits. Persons who cared only for themselves were never possibilities, but anyone who was troubled about China or Spain, anyone who was willing to take responsibility in a union, anyone who wanted to know what he could do to fight fascism, was worth working on. In the middle class the first step was usually theoretical: one would lend the prospective member some such book as John Strachey's

*Coming Struggle for Power*, which might or might not be followed by *The Handbook of Marxism*, according to the extent of his intellectual curiosity. This theoretical stage might last for a few weeks or for several months, or the prospect might have gone through it himself independently. In any case, if he reached the point of agreeing that capitalism was collapsing and that socialism must take its place, the question of joining the party could be raised. This was not, in the united front period, an invitation to join a conspiratorial group pledged to the violent overthrow of the government. It was, on the contrary, an invitation to take part in the militant defense of democracy. The prospect's objection, therefore, was likely to be, "But I'm already doing everything Communists do. Why should I join the party?" The answer was that as a Communist his efforts would be coördinated, he would be one of the group that planned the activities of the democratic front, and his work would be more effective. There often remained practical objections, concerning the need for secrecy perhaps, and there were usually questions about Russia. These latter I at least always answered by saying that I did not regard Russia as a utopia; that, however, its defects could largely be explained by its backwardness and by the ring of enemies surrounding it; that its record with regard to China, Spain, and collective security ought to make Americans ashamed; that it proved the feasibility of socialism by making it work under the most unfavorable conditions; and that in any case the party, whatever its earlier sectarianism, was now too wise to try to follow the Russian

model. "You want what the party wants," I would say, "and you admit that the party is the only organization working effectively towards that end. Have you any excuse for not joining?"

It is easy for enemies of Communism, whether reactionaries or radicals of some other stripe, to dismiss the idealism in Communist propaganda as hypocrisy, but it is not intelligent. The Communists may be wrong, and their kind of idealism may be dangerous, but the majority of them are not hypocrites, even when their line is essentially hypocritical. I have known hundreds of Communists, and there were not half a dozen self-seeking opportunists among them. There is more self-seeking in the average church, more hypocrisy on the average college faculty, more opportunism in the average charitable society than there is in the Communist party.

What, then, about the Communists' vices? They are charged with capturing organizations and using them for their own purposes; they are charged with lying; they are charged with using any means to gain their ends. Each of these charges is in some measure true. I do not defend such methods, but it is clear to me that one cannot condemn the Communist party without also condemning many one-hundred percent American institutions. Ruthlessness in the quest for power is not something that Americans have to learn from Moscow. Indeed, if one talks, as I have on occasion done, with some shrewd Red-baiting politician, one realizes that he is genuinely shocked only by the willingness of Communists, especially in the early days of the movement, to



avow the tactics that he and they alike practice. Beyond that he is bewildered because, in his understanding of the term, they are incorruptible.

The first party organizer I ever knew, back in the days of my earliest fellow-traveling, was a city boy, a college graduate with a serious interest in literature, who was working among the farmers of upstate New York. It was not a job in which anyone could have had much success, and he was almost ideally unfitted for it, but he did his work, thumbing his way over hundreds of miles to attend a meeting here, interview a prospect there, conduct a class somewhere else. His tiny salary was seldom paid in full, and he was often hungry and worn out when he came to our house; and yet I never heard him complain of anything but the lack of opportunity to read and the long periods of separation from his wife. Since then I have known many organizers. I remember one who, pitifully frightened, went down to Harlan County at the time of the miners' strike and took his beating and his jail sentence like a man. I think of several who went to fight, some of them to die, in Spain. There are few organizers who have not had their share of physical violence, and all have known hunger and exhaustion. Some of those I knew were calm and gentle, others violently dogmatic. I have liked some and disliked others very much indeed, but there have been few I was not compelled to respect.

There is something else that I want to say about the party. I have pointed out elsewhere \* that literary men, whether members of the party or fellow-travelers, were

\* *New Republic*, Sept. 9, 1940.

not regimented. I can go further than that, and say that party discipline was never exerted to influence what I wrote or said. Suggestions were made, of course, but if I objected to them, as I often did, I got my own way. Sometimes, when I read the testimony of penitents before Mr. Dies or Mr. Rapp, and learn how they were forced by the party to commit some gross offense against their moral code or their intellectual integrity, I wonder what was the matter with their guts. To be sure, if I had disagreed with the party on some fundamental issue, I should have left the party or been kicked out, but within those limits I was free. I am not certain that I was always honest, in the strictest intellectual sense, but that was my fault, not the party's. And this, I think, needs to be said for the sake of the many honest intellectuals who have belonged—or who do belong—to the Communist party.

Lenin always insisted that a person's intentions did not matter, that all that counted was the objective fact. Hence a kind-hearted but loose-thinking humanitarian might be a greater villain to him, because more dangerous to the working class, than the ruthless exploiter or his criminal tool. That is a conception I have repudiated, along with a good deal else of Leninism, and, though the Communists would apply it to us, I doubt if we should apply it to them. The Communists may be a threat to what we believe in, and, if so, they must be resisted, but that is no reason for assuming they are villains. On the contrary, the majority of them are mistaken idealists, and most of the others were idealists once, before their mistakes corrupted them. I realize

that the same thing can be said about many conservatives and some fascists, but I am trying to make a distinction, not to offer a defense.

In any question of human motives the shading is so delicate that I do not know whether I have given a true picture or not. I may have exaggerated our idealism, our innocence, or our sincerity. But if so, my slight distortion is as nothing compared with the exaggeration of Communist vices of which not only reactionary obscurantists, not only wilful propagandists, but also disillusioned radicals are guilty. Who were the Communists? On the whole, a good lot.

#### IV. *Thoughts After the Pact*

We were a good lot, but rather blind. For we had not seen that it was the Russophile bureaucrats who had control. Thousands of us had come flooding into the party, and we flattered ourselves that we had changed it. Sometimes it occurred to us that we had done just about what Wilson had called for: we had taken Communism away from the Communists, from Communists, that is, of the kind he was objecting to. And we were as wrong as we could be.

In a debate in Boston in the spring of 1939 I quoted from the constitution of the Communist party the paragraph on the defense of democracy. "Father Curran no doubt will tell you," I said, "that this is a trick, that we don't really believe it. Be reasonable. How far would a party get if it told people one thing when it asked them to become members and something else when they had become members? Even if our leaders

had some design contrary to that statement in the party constitution, they would be helpless against the members of the party." I believed that, and I was wrong.

In the confusing weeks after the Soviet-Nazi pact I realized that I could not follow the party's new line, but even then I was tempted to put the blame on a leadership that had always seemed to me lacking in initiative and intelligence. It was only some months afterward that I understood how fantastic it had been to imagine that any Communist leader would oppose, or even criticize, anything the Soviet Union did. I learned two things that perhaps I should have known before but didn't: Moscow cracked the whip, and the bureaucrats controlled the party.

Though the leaders obviously were not forewarned, though Moscow had permitted them to go on denying the possibility of a Soviet-Nazi pact down to the moment when it was signed, though they were compelled to make fools of themselves as well as to tear down what they had spent four devoted years in building up, they took their medicine. I cannot answer for their private thoughts, which I suspect were bitter, but they publicly competed with each other in asininities in order to prove their blind loyalty to the USSR. I came to see that any talk of principles—Marxist-Leninist principles quite as much as democratic principles—was eyewash. The leaders had, in the first place, organizational loyalty: they could no more conceive of life outside the party than a New York City ward-heeler could imagine life apart from Tammany. And above that they had loyalty to the Soviet Union: having spent twenty years

in its defense, they accepted orders as unquestioningly as officers of the regular army, and when there were no orders they were grateful for hints.

No one will ever know how many members left the party in the months after the pact, but, though badly damaged, it survived the aboutface. The same loyalties, in a different degree, held the rank-and-file as held the leaders. After my resignation a party official said to me in an open letter, "To me it always appeared that you had an inner lack of conviction that the Soviet Union really symbolizes Socialism Victorious." He was right so far as I was concerned, but there were many members, even among the intellectuals, to whom he could not have objected on that ground. It was an intellectual who asked me, "Don't you know in your soul that Stalin and Molotov are comrades?" I had no such transcendental assurance, but certain of my friends did.

In the same way many members of the rank-and-file, though of course their whole existence was not bound up with the party, could not see what meaning life would have apart from it. I had not fully realized the emotional quality that membership had for certain persons until they started writing me at the time of my resignation. Here, for example, is a young woman speaking:

So it all comes to this: that your whole life previous to this time, all you underwent for the party, all the privations you seem willingly to have suffered when you could have had any post you wanted anywhere in the country, all this has gone up in a puff of smoke and lost its meaning. What for? You might just as well have taken it nice and easy and saved yourself the trouble. It might just as well never have happened.

What a pity, to find one's life suddenly without meaning. What is left for you now? You have maintained your precious integrity. I suppose you can sit and contemplate it like some unbelievable Buddha. But unless you have guts enough to admit a mistake, you have taken the first step downward on a path which leads to a swamp. Now you are reduced to the rank of one of the pack who snarls at the heels of the leadership of our party. What a position to be in! I think it won't be so good for your integrity, Mr. Hicks. Has Mr. Hearst come to you yet with a good offer for your story, the story of "How I Preserved My Integrity from the Communist Party"? If he hasn't, don't worry; he'll be around.

On the morning of March 12, 1938, one A. P. Rosengoltz made the following statement: "Woe and misfortune will betide him who strays even to the smallest extent from the general line of the Bolshevik party. I want you to believe me, to believe in the sincerity of the words which I now utter." You can believe him, because a few mornings later he was shot for high treason in the Soviet Union. I guess you haven't read the account of those trials. If you start on page 714 of the last one and read just the final pleas of these men, you might still be able to draw a lesson from it before it is too late.

That particular religious fervor was more common than I would have supposed, but it was not the general rule. Many of my friends were at first overcome by the pact, and they had inner conviction neither of the comradeship of Stalin nor of the sacredness of the Bolshevik line, but they were not forced, as in effect I was, to take an immediate stand, and they waited to see what would happen. A few of them were expelled for their hesitations by zealous branches, but the party as a whole recognized the expediency of tolerance. As the autumn of 1939 went by, they began to feel that, if their hope in the Soviet Union had been dimmed, there was no greater radiance anywhere else. In a desperate world even a rather bad Soviet Union was something to cling to. As for the party, it was not quite what they had

thought it to be, but it was still the only militant revolutionary organization. Some of them held on with difficulty, consoling themselves with private explanations and waiting for what has now happened, war between Germany and the Soviet Union, but others found it easy, when time had dulled the shock of the pact, to go back to their old habits.

I can understand all this, and it would not occur to me to question the sincerity of those who stood by the party, but that does not mean I think they are right. On the contrary, I have been driven by events since the pact and by a reconsideration of the theory and practice of the party to a position very different from theirs. I left the party because I disagreed with its policies: on the pact itself I reserved judgment; but not indefinitely. The partition of Poland, the seizure of the Baltic Republics, and the invasion of Finland, all demonstrated to me that the only kind of Communism the Soviet government was interested in was the kind that could be spread by the Red Army. I concluded that that government was, for all practical purposes, a bureaucracy interested in the preservation and extension of its own power. I reviewed the history of the Soviet Union and re-read Lenin to see how this had happened, and decided that the tendency was inherent in Leninism and in certain aspects of Marxism itself.\* I came to the conclusion that there could be no shortcuts for the believer in democracy. I still believed that capitalism was decaying and that some form of socialism must take its place, and I continued to recognize the ruthlessness with

\* "The Blind Alley of Marxism," *Nation*, Sept. 28, 1940.

which the beneficiaries of the existing order defended it, but I repudiated any idea that we could get more democracy by giving up what we have. I rejected, in short, the whole theory of the dictatorship of the proletariat and Lenin's conception of the monolithic party.

I was driven to these conclusions not merely by my reflections on Communism but also by the dramatic demonstration of fascist efficiency. If on the one hand I was forced to see that the new social order in Russia was dominated by a power-grasping bureaucracy, on the other I had to admit that the power-grasping bureaucracy in Germany had created a new social order. There were, I recognized, striking differences between the two regimes, but the significant fact was that, starting from wholly different premises, they had come closer and closer together.

I began to see, in other words, that fascism was the revolution. Marx had been right in his prediction of the collapse of capitalism. He had been right in saying that the very nature of the means of production in an advanced industrial economy would demand large-scale planning and control by the state rather than by individuals. But he had been wrong in maintaining that only the proletariat could make the revolution and perhaps in maintaining that the proletariat could make it at all. He had been wrong in making the public ownership of the means of production his chief aim, for fascism had shown that, if the bureaucracy could control production, it did not matter who owned the factories. Above all else he had been wrong in his assumption that the revolution would carry over and extend the cultural



and humanitarian achievements of the nineteenth century, for fascism repudiated them openly and Soviet Communism in practice.

Fascism, I began to say to myself, is what happens—or at least what is very likely to happen—when capitalism breaks down. Monopoly capitalism lends itself easily to bureaucratic control. Moreover, it is immeasurably easier for a tyrannical government to adopt a planned economy than for a democratic government to do so. When capitalism becomes insufferable to its victims, or when, as is perhaps more likely to happen first in the world as it is, a capitalist nation cannot compete with its fascist rivals, fascism is the natural—but, I trust, not the inevitable—development.

I am talking about the conclusions to which I came, and I am not trying to give evidence for them. The theory is not peculiar to me, and evidence for it can be found elsewhere. My reaction to these conclusions, however, is part of the story. The choices were simple: I could accept fascism as the revolution, saying, as some of my friends say, that this is the way history is going and there is nothing for us to do but regretfully to acquiesce; or I could make up my mind to go on fighting fascism in the hope that, if we could defeat this immediate onslaught, we could find ways of shaping history. I chose the latter course.

### *V. In Search of a Moral*

The lessons of this story are, I fear, largely negative. I am sorry, but one of the things I have learned not to do is to pretend that I have a solution for the world's

problems when I haven't. Last winter I was carrying on a debate by mail with an acquaintance of mine, who finally declared that he hadn't changed his mind on politics in the past twenty years. I lost interest. I have no respect for persons who haven't changed their minds at least once in the past decade, and I am afraid of persons who know exactly what ought to be done.

In Arthur Koestler's *Darkness at Noon* Commissar Rubashov, awaiting trial and death, reflects on the character of Communist theory and practice. He can find no flaw in the logic: if your purpose is right, your means must be. This is not, Koestler knows, the first time men have so reasoned, and at the beginning of one section he quotes the Bishop of Verden, who said in 1411: "When the existence of the Church is threatened, she is released from the commandments of morality. With unity as the end, the use of every means is sanctified, even cunning, treachery, violence, simony, prison, death. For all order is for the sake of the community, and the individual must be sacrificed to the common good." But the bishop at least had the consolation of believing that he was carrying out God's will, whereas Rubashov knows that he obeys the will of "No. 1." And what he comes to doubt is not so much the infallibility of Stalin as the infallibility of man.

"We have thrown overboard all conventions," he writes in his diary; "our sole guiding principle is that of consequent logic." But the experiment had failed; so far at least there was no end in sight to justify the means that had been used. "For forty years he had fought

against economic fatality. It was the central ill of humanity, the cancer which was eating into its entrails. It was there that one must operate; the rest of the healing process would follow. . . . The only solution was the surgeon's knife and his cool calculation. But wherever the knife had been applied, a new sore had appeared in place of the old." He began to wonder: "Perhaps it did not suit mankind to sail without ballast. And perhaps reason alone was a defective compass, which led one on such a winding, twisted course that the goal finally disappeared in the mist."

Many intellectuals have had doubts like Rubashov's, and some have concluded that the only hope is a return to religion. Man recognizes his insufficiency, they argue, only when he admits the greatness of God. As one neo-Protestant puts it, if men don't believe in hell after death, they'll get a hell of bombs on earth. But some of us remember that men had plenty of hell on earth while they still believed in hell in the hereafter. We agree that a belief in the limitlessness of human powers brings disaster—Herman Melville might have taught us that lesson—but we cannot conclude that there is therefore an omnipotent and beneficent God in whom man should put his trust. Our discovery concerns man, not God.

Our practical problems, of course, remain, and they will not wait forever—or even very long—for men to solve them. More or less bad men will go on making history, more or less badly, and practical decisions will always involve supporting bad men against worse. As

a matter of fact, Rubashov's new party in their monk's cowls, preaching purity of means, could ruin the world almost as effectively as the old party with its dogma of human infallibility and the justifying end. There is neither one way of ruin nor one way of salvation, and perhaps, as there is no absolute salvation, there is no absolute ruin, though what we are facing is near enough to it for our purposes.

Those of us who have lost a series of certitudes have become suspicious of all certitude. That is what I meant when I said that the lessons of this story are mostly negative. When I first got out of the party, I missed the sense of being constantly active in a good cause, but I have learned that doing something for the sake of doing something creates one of the most dangerous of illusions. This is not a counsel of passivity. I believe in action, and, if I emphasize understanding, it is for the sake of action. Action should grow, however, not out of faith in the inevitability of socialism or anything else, but out of wisdom with regard to the issues and humility with regard to the outcome.

Though troubled about the future, I am in no fundamental sense a pessimist. We have seen good turning into evil, and the spectacle is so cruel a shock to our sensibilities, which are post-Victorian in spite of everything, that we have loudly re-asserted our own version of the doctrine of original sin. We have done well to recognize that our ancestors were not wholly fools on the subject of human nature, but there is more to learn than that. Rubashov forgot that his whole life was an act of self-abnegation that could never be explained in

terms of his consequent logic. In other words, he chose to deny in himself what he found it necessary to ignore in others. If the experiment failed, it may have been because men were too good as well as too bad for it. That, at least, is a basis for hope.

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## When Liberalism Went Totalitarian

BY EUGENE LYONS

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IT is not easy to define a liberal. The liberals themselves have tried it with indifferent results. The dictionary is no help at all: the moderation of spirit implied by Dr. Webster would get you blackballed from any typical liberal fraternity as lacking in faith and harboring deviations. A study of the house organs of American liberalism, such as the *Nation* and the *New Republic*, only deepens the confusion: such journals are normally intolerant in their judgments of people and facts, their appraisal of ideas which rub them the wrong way. Certainly common sense is no guide, since the self-ordained priests of the creed are notoriously illiberal, intellectually parsimonious and emotionally conservative in anything affecting their favorite preconceptions and misconceptions.

But if they cannot define themselves, liberals at least have no trouble at all defining a reactionary. It's simply someone who disagrees with them on essentials of the current liberal catechism. Take a convenient point in

the career of latterday American liberalism: the lush years of 1937-38, before the dogmatic, self-righteous religiosity of our leading liberals had been staggered by the blow of the Stalin-Hitler alliance. At that time they could spot a reactionary blindfolded. He could be instantly recognized, and accordingly condemned and ostracized, by any of the following stigmata:

1. He objected when the Kremlin god of vengeance and his G.P.U. seraphim slaughtered Old Bolsheviks, rotten liberals, peasants who owned two cows or demurred against the confiscation of their land, and other social misfits in Russia.

2. He entertained doubts of the perfection of the Loyalist regime in Spain under its Muscovite dictatorship, remained squeamish about the methods and skeptical about the motives of the Cheka in Spain, and could not accept placidly the "sacrifice" involved in liquidating anarchists, socialists, liberals and other republicans during the Spanish Civil War.

3. He had a good word for the American Federation of Labor and William Green as against the C.I.O. and John L. Lewis, Harry Bridges, Michael Quill, Joseph Curran, *et al.*

4. He approved, in the slightest measure, the dastardly work of the Dies Committee in embarrassing Corliss Lamont, Vito Marcantonio, the Rev. Dr. Harry Ward, Muriel Draper and Lionel Stander; or its revelations about such liberal and independently American institutions as the late League for Peace and Democracy, the American Youth Congress, the Friends of the Soviet Union, the International Labor Defense, the League of

American Writers, the Friends of the Abraham Lincoln Brigade and the Hollywood Anti-Nazi League.

5. He permitted his honest views or findings on disputed issues to be published in a Hearst magazine or newspaper, even after all the self-styled liberal and near-liberal publications had enforced a rigid censorship against those views or findings in their own fashionable pages.

6. He cast aspersions on the motives or methods of the supermen in and around the New Deal in concentrating ever more power in their bureaux and commissions, in enlarging the Supreme Court, and in revising life by decree generally.

7. He considered seriously the wicked and absurd libels spread by some writers and some renegade Bolshevik officials about secret contacts and negotiations between the totalitarian dictatorship of Germany and the democratic dictatorship of Russia.

8. He remained unimpressed by sneering references to sharecroppers in the South, the Mooney case, lynchings and *Grapes of Wrath* as complete justification for liquidation of *kulaks*, the murder of Bukharin, forced labor on a millionfold scale and systematized terror in the Soviet Union.

9. He allowed himself a margin of doubt about the utter depravity of Neville Chamberlain and his associates in their blundering efforts to buy peace by paying blackmail, and their unreasonable skepticism about Stalin's "democratic" foreign policies.

10. He failed to concede that Russia, under its new Constitution, enjoyed a superior brand of democracy,



its superiority being especially evident in the fact that it embodied some gadgets of our own miserably inferior brand.

11. He was caught communing—in the flesh or through the printed page—with assorted agents of Hitler, Mussolini and the Mikado such as John Dewey, Max Eastman, Benjamin Stolberg, Eugene Lyons, James T. Farrell, Isaac Don Levine, Sidney Hook, William Henry Chamberlin, etc.; the common denominator of all these scoundrels, of course, being that they detected flaws in the Stalinist heaven sooner than Freda Kirchwey and Louis Fischer.

I am not, at this juncture, entering into an examination of these stigmata to determine whether they are right or wrong, noble or depraved. The point is that in these matters there could not be, for the self-proclaimed liberal, any edge of doubt. Merely to discuss such fundamentals instead of damning the heretics forthwith was to put yourself irretrievably in the category of lost souls. How could anyone who questioned the nobility of the Soviet concentration camps be given the benefit of a hearing before excommunication? How could anyone who detected elements of similarity in the Hitler and Stalin regimes expect to evade mayhem at the hands of embattled liberals? Obviously such perversions, unless scotched quickly and completely, might encourage worse, even unto the suspicion that persecution of *kulaks* and bourgeois intellectuals in Russia was in a class with persecution of Jews and bourgeois intellectuals in the Nazi Reich.

The sad fact is that liberalism, once descriptive of an attitude of mind, became, during the cruel soul-searing years of the Depression, the name for a set of beliefs. Individual tenets of the faith might be revised from time to time by its political hierarchs; but the catechism at any given period was rigid and indivisible. There was no moral or intellectual elbow-room. The disciplined liberal did not even do his own rationalizing, but followed the lines laid down by accredited masters of apologetics. Unquestionably the great mass of Americans entitled to the designation of liberal, whether they think of themselves as in that category or not, may be exempted from this indictment. I speak specifically of what might be called the *official* liberalism—of those who spoke in its name, who had control of its publications and its organizations, who wore the togas of liberalism.

Recently I completed a book on the Stalinist penetration of American life.\* In the course of its preparation I had to go through scores of back issues of the liberal weeklies and stacks of other documentary records of the topsy-turvy liberalism of the 1930's. The intellectual aroma around the stuff, I can attest, is more than faintly nauseating. In relation to the pseudo-liberal obsessions, especially those revolving around Russia and things Russian, thinking is treated as high treason. Views are neither reasoned nor reasonable. The rawest sort of misinformation is displayed with a flourish if it tends to strengthen some favorite illusion. Some things are automatically approved. Others are no less automatically condemned. Labels are more important than the

\* "The Red Decade" by Eugene Lyons, Bobbs-Merrill Co., 1941.

goods under the labels. The standardized liberal heroes are glorified without measure and the accredited villains, particularly those who dared criticize the New Deal in Washington and the raw deal in Moscow, are damned without measure. The nearest thing suggesting a conscience that one finds in such liberal literature is the abnormal shrillness in defending certain horrors, since that is clearly an effort to shout down a bad conscience.

One peculiarity of the official liberalism of this period—of the period I have summed up as “the Red Decade”—deserves special noting. It is almost symbolic of the raucous mob spirit which had displaced the calm individual conscience among these people. I refer to the tendency toward “collective opinion.” Alleged ideas or viewpoints were no longer advanced by single spokesmen on the basis of their intrinsic logic or inescapable relevance. They were advanced by regimented groups of spokesmen, in manifestoes and statements and open letters and symposia bearing a score, a hundred, a hundred and fifty, even four hundred signatures. Brigades of condemners, battalions of approvers, parades of protestors—all carrying the same banners, chanting the same slogans, goosestepping mentally and emotionally. Never mind how far-fetched and ludicrous the contents, provided enough good liberal names were attached!

Did “reactionaries” dare suggest that there was forced labor in the Soviet timber regions and mines and Arctic canal works? Several score neo-liberals signed their names to a round-robin “denying” these libels and Stalin’s prison camps were no more!

Did rumor-mongers charge that a horrifying famine had been enforced by the Kremlin to "punish" forty million Soviet citizens in an area as large as the United States? Half a hundred experts on nutrition and agronomy, all the way from Beverly Hills to Park Avenue penthouses, thereupon condemned the capitalists and Trotskyists responsible for the libel, and the famine was liquidated.

When a writer on the Left fell from grace by challenging some of the current liberal phobias, it was not enough for individual critics to tear into his hide. The excommunication was completed with a collective many-signed attack. (See the *New Republic*, January 12, 1938, for instance, where twenty-five people told off James T. Farrell.)

The non-liberal world was shocked by the titanic blood purges in the ranks of Russian communists, officials, factory directors, Red Army generals, authors, professors, and the accompanying series of trials of Old Bolsheviks. Instantly there were editorials and speeches by the liberal leaders to explain and justify the new Stalinist triumphs. Maxwell Stewart showed to his own satisfaction that it was all a lovely expression of burgeoning democracy in Russia; his *Nation* editorially linked it with the "abdication of the dictatorship" jubilantly reported by its Moscow correspondent; the *New Republic*, in the person of its literary editor, tasted the trial evidence and found it wholly palatable if slightly putrescent.

But none of this was enough. The matter was not finally settled until the purges had been collectively

approved by some 150 liberal writers, scientists, editors, Hollywood proletarians, "Broadway figures" and many other authorities on revolutionary jurisprudence and dialectics . . . Comrade Yagoda (until he was himself liquidated), Comrade Yezhov (until his turn for liquidation came), and Comrade Beria after them thus had their butcheries neatly sanctioned by long-distance rabbis, from Dashiell Hammett to General Yakhontoff, as entirely *kosher*.

When Professor John Dewey and others ventured to test the judgment of the liberal holy-rollers by an independent inquiry into such facts about the purges as were subject to objective inquiry outside of the holy land, the liberal periodicals and organizations naturally proceeded to attack the heretics.

That, however, was not enough. The job was not considered done until the infidels had been properly tagged as fascists and tools of the devil in Mexico City in a collective attack by a self-righteous "stinkers committee"—a name deriving from the bad odor the eighty-eight signers sought to throw around the investigation of the Moscow trials.

The climactic example of herd emotion which passed for liberal opinion was presented to an indifferent world in August 1939. Some two-hundred intellectuals had formed a Committee for Cultural Freedom, with the announced purpose of fighting off totalitarian encroachment on American freedom of thought, even if disguised in communist slogans. Self-evidently, such blasphemy could not be allowed to go unpunished. Official liberalism sneered at a pronouncement with only 200 backers

and quickly produced a pronunciamento with four-hundred signatures, which branded those misguided intellectuals—and anyone else who dared mention Russia and Germany in the same breath—as “fascists” and “friends of fascists,” “Trotskyites” and “reactionaries.” Thereafter, surely, no great liberal could suggest that there was anything in common between Berlin and Moscow, unless it be the greatest liberal of them all, Comrade Djugashvilli, who signed a compact with Hitler only nine days after this letter of the Four Hundred was released to the press.

Again, I am not entering into a discussion here as to the merits of the assorted claims and sentiments attested by brigades and battalions deployed in defense of congealed liberal opinions. The point is that numbers came to take the place of cogency and content in argument. Ganging up became the accepted strategy in dealing with dissenters. The liberals, it seemed, would rather be in the wrong collectively than in the right alone. They closed their ranks, with epithets for hand grenades and pointed adjectives for bayonets, to shield their consoling delusions.

To put the matter bluntly, they had become know-nothing totalitarians. They had yielded in a kind of ecstatic despair to the blight of regimented thinking and herd action that was sweeping through the world. They had ceased, in all but name, to be liberals. The liberal spirit survived, as it must always survive—among radicals, conservatives, New Dealers, anti-New Dealers, even among more idealistic communists. It survived everywhere except among the official liberals.

The standard reproach against liberals has been that they are unable to make up their minds in time of stress. It is said that they fiddle on their scruples and mental reservations while Rome burns. That complaint is implicit in the famous definition of a liberal as a person with both feet firmly planted in mid-air. Whatever validity there may be in the reproach in general, it certainly no longer held true for the official American liberalism: the articulate, organized and highly publicized sector which had embraced Stalinism.

The traditional attitudes of scientific skepticism toward all dogmas, civilized distrust of those in power (not excepting liberals and those adorned with ideological halos), open-mindedness and fair play, became as rare in their publications and at their endless cocktail parties as in *Pravda* or the *Völkischer Beobachter*. Liberalism had become just another orthodoxy, with a calendar of demigods headed by Stalin and a calendar of demons that included all the "reactionaries" whom I have identified above. The feet of such liberals were no longer floating in mid-air. They were firmly imbedded in the swamps of Kremlin intrigues, amorality and terror.

It was, moreover, a decidedly fashionable liberalism. And small wonder. It offered the vocabulary of broad-mindedness and the comforts of a prescribed faith all in one package. It had suddenly acquired power—jobs, large audiences, social prestige, patronage of a hundred gross or subtle kinds—through its double association with the New Deal at home and a great nation on the other side of the ocean. Though pretending still to be

rational and even politically freethinking, this liberalism actually had turned blindly sectarian, intractably intolerant. Its cohorts screamed "Heretic! fascist! reactionary! Trotskyite!" at the first sign of independent thought or even skepticism on the sacred subjects. It was the fantastic liberalism that demanded boycott of Germany and Italy but apologized for Stalin's sale of oil and coal to the Rome-Berlin Axis; that went purple denouncing Hitler's purge of June 30, 1934, and two years later went livid explaining away purges a hundred times more sanguinary and disgusting instituted by Stalin; that clamored for open doors for the refugees from fascist persecution, but failed to notice Moscow's refusal to accept these unfortunates. The fashionable liberalism hypocritically drew fine distinctions between different brands of brutality instead of fighting them all, and thus promoted the very lunacies it pretended to combat.

There was a time when a man's social outlook, his philosophy of life, was his most private and intimate possession. It was the sum-total of all his experience, thinking, reading, filtered through his own character. An honest conservative defended a set of established values which he had come to cherish through the years. An honest revolutionary reached his radicalism through a long and often painful process of doubt and study. The liberal came slowly, by the use of his free intelligence, to accept certain humane and rational guiding principles. Read any true autobiography—whether *The Education of Henry Adams* or Emma Goldman's *Living My Life*—and you follow the slow maturing of



a personal philosophy under the impacts of living. But that was long long ago. Nowadays a nice new shiny political religion can be acquired as easily as a ready-made suit of clothes, and cheaper. Fascism, communism, racism, in uniform colors, complete with the latest gadgets, standard quality guaranteed by the swastika or hammer-and-sickle seal, are being sold over propaganda counters. And some people just can't resist the bargain prices for factory-made faiths.

Totalitarian liberalism was of that caliber. Its ranks were suddenly crowded with overnight converts, who had acquired a full equipment of ready-made views in one mad leap from apathy to enthusiasm. The old-fashioned liberals who retained their sanity even in the Popular Front period were read out of the ranks and became untouchables among their own former friends. The rest, among them many of the most distinguished figures in the milieu of American liberalism, fell for the Muscovite bargains. Their names are written into any number of documents defending the Kremlin's acts, bawling out those who valued justice even above comradely cocktail parties.

Once upon a time liberalism had its habitat in the minds and hearts of men. Now it had a specific geographical location and a rigid political allegiance. At the core of what passed for liberalism was the fantastic Soviet Russian fixation. What was readily recognized as a concentration camp in Italy or Germany was magically transmuted into an educational academy and an institute of human rehabilitation if located within the

frontiers of the Soviet domain; or it was "denied" altogether. Garden variety persecution in the Nazi or Fascist fields was hailed as orchidaceous social engineering and communist achievement when grown in Soviet gardens. Suppression of civil rights and human decencies on a scale and with an intensity unmatched even in Germany became esoteric proofs of a higher democracy when they carried the imprimatur of the G.P.U.

And the fixation applied to every last extension of Russia abroad—to all of Stalin's open and disguised branch offices: Leagues of This and Congresses of That. Anyone who raised uncivil questions about the paternity of these organizations was straightway consigned to the special hell reserved for "red-baiters," and no pains were spared to make his fate as hellish as possible.

Exaggeration? Read almost any issue of the so-called liberal weeklies during the years when the aberration was especially acute. Leaf through the proceedings of any of the congresses of writers, painters, youth, Negroes under pseudo-liberal banners. You will find glowing and gloating accounts of the liquidation of millions, the beautiful sacrifices of the Russian masses, the ineffable talents of the butcher in the Kremlin. Particularly you will find hallelujahs for the magnificent courage of the Muscovite masters in killing and killing and killing, matched in every case with anathemas against those at home or abroad who refused to join the macabre howling for human sacrifices on the altar of socialism in one country. The liberal records of the period abound in angry "denials" of Russian facts which have since become common knowledge. The presumptive happiness

of the Soviet masses was repeatedly proved statistically and rhetorically, and everyone felt better for the exercise, except, of course, the said masses. If only the latest batch of horrors had nice Soviet seals on them, they were accepted and added tenderly to the mountain of make-believe. When some atrocity could not be wished away or denied, it was slurred over as an unavoidable blemish.

Political double bookkeeping, indeed, became so routine among the totalitarian liberals that they were really no longer aware of it. Often on the same page, sometimes in the same paragraph, abominations in one sector of the globe were attacked while their equivalents in the Soviet sector were glorified. The liberals seemed to have thrown away their moral compass. They had lost the sense of right and wrong, lost their old instinctive revulsion against mass murder on any excuse. Liberals now were concerned primarily with nurturing their favorite lies, safeguarding their precious self-delusions against the depredations of renegades, red-baiters, Trotskyites and other vandals.

The things that once had set liberals apart from traditionalists and self-seekers—their ability to see whole, to acknowledge painful truths, to strip social phenomena of their camouflage—were lost in the shuffle. They had gotten over the ancient “prejudices” against excessive state power, against framed political trials, against sloganeering as a substitute for thinking.

Now it will be argued, and with a real degree of validity, that these strange liberals were at bottom victims of a fraud, more to be pitied than censured. They were being played for suckers by the communists.

In their hatred for the Nazi and Fascist insanity they were easy prey for the barkers of a more beguilingly decorated Grand Guignol.

Yet, the liberals' eagerness to be fooled, their passionate resistance against being unfooled, is in the final check-up the largest item in the reckoning. What has been said of the victims of confidence games applies in some measure to the victims of the Stalinist political confidence game. The salesmen of gold bricks and stolen goods would starve to death if buyers were not greedy and dishonest. Our official liberals were anxious to be gulled. They panted for a short-cut to Utopia, even if it meant cutting a bloody path through massed human flesh. In an epoch of economic disasters and political sadism, the temptation of a ready-made set of consolations, of glib answers to questions supported by the final logic of a Red Army and a powerful Secret Police, was just too much for their human frailty.

The only way to take Hitler and Franco, Manchuria and Ethiopia, the Liberty League and Father Coughlin, was to retire to some convenient paradise of their own devising. Russia served the purpose beautifully. Stalin, no one could deny, was not Hitler or Franco or Coughlin, so why quibble about what he really was? Having acquired their gold brick, the totalitarian liberals did their best to convince themselves and the rest of the country that it was 18-carat gold. The fact that so many of their former colleagues, at the risk of excommunication from the liberal milieu, did try to expose the hoax stands as an indictment of the official liberals. They were, without doubt, exceedingly willing victims.

There is no denying their anti-fascist and anti-Nazi zeal. But I submit that detestation of Hitler is scarcely a sufficient test of liberalism. We all know hidebound Tories who have no more use for the Nazi terror than the loudest liberals. One might as well take disapproval of wife-beating and highway robbery as clinching proof of a passion for social reform. No, the Russian terror provided a much truer and more significant test, precisely because it was sugar-coated with sweet "Marxist" explanations. And in that test the liberals failed abysmally.

I feel that I have some warrant for making this judgement. Not only have I watched their pro-Soviet antics, their rationalizations and sleight-of-mind in America, but I saw literally thousands of them at the shrines of the new totalitarian faith in their special Mecca. It was a most unpleasant spectacle. They begged to be stuffed with synthetic statistics and argued with the rare official guide who fearfully let drop some hints of the truth. They rummaged among assorted horrors like old ladies at a charity sale. The most obvious signs of popular suffering and despair failed to touch their insensitive ideological hearts. Above all they would not endanger their comforting new faith by probing or doubting or checking. Then they returned to America to write articles, give lectures, thrill dinner parties and compose books to swell the cult of Russia-worshippers.

They can scarcely justify themselves on the ground of innocence. To match Fischer, Hindus, Corliss Lamont, the Webbs, etc. whooping it up for the Kremlin dictator, there were Chamberlin, the Tchernavins, Max

Eastman, Victor Serge, Andre Gide, Solonevich, Kitchin, Max Nomad, Andrew Smith, dozens of others whom the inside-out liberals either ignored or vilified. There was the Social Democratic and liberal labor press of the world, seeking to tell the truth about Russia and the Soviet conspiracies outside of Russia. And there was the stark reality spread under their very eyes.

As early as September, 1937, for instance, the inside story of Stalinist perversion of the Spanish revolution was told for Americans by Anita Brenner in the *Modern Quarterly*. Soon thereafter the blood-curdling story was confirmed and enlarged upon by others: not "fascists" or "capitalists" or people conceivably suspect of sympathy with Franco, but socialists like Sam Baron, communists like Liston Oak, liberals like John Dos Passos who had gone to Spain to serve the Loyalists. The socialist and labor and Trotskyist press of the world was filled with reports.

But the liberals preferred the sugar-coated versions passed by the Stalinist censors in Loyalist Spain, the romanticized propaganda passed off by easy-going or cynical correspondents and literati. The Spanish lie dovetailed too neatly into the larger Russian lie and our totalitarian liberals were content with it all. Their complacency helped to turn the magnificent outburst of popular American sympathy for the Loyalist cause into a grim joke, as all the emotion was siphoned off by the communist racketeers into their own reservoirs.

Probably the most striking example of the totalitarian temper of latterday liberalism was provided by the reaction to the Soviet blood purges. It's a much-told tale

and I shall not repeat it here. Suffice that the cumulative Russian crime could not be shrugged off by the most self-righteous of the brethren. It was too big to be ignored. But almost to the end of the lengthening obscenity the official liberals wholly or in part accepted the crime and in effect became its American patrons. I have already indicated how they ganged up industriously on those Americans who were impelled to attempt an independent investigation of such episodes in the purges as lent themselves to objective inquiry outside of Russia.

We may readily find explanations for this "liberalism." But we cannot find excuses for it. And we should not. There can be no hope for American liberalism until it cleanses itself of the totalitarian accretions. You cannot eat the liberal cake and have it: you cannot, that is, consider yourself a liberal and yield to the phobias of our epoch, whether black or brown or red. There can be no hope for American liberalism until it renounces its recent totalitarian past—which, I am convinced, is still very much the present for a lot of self-styled liberals—and returns to the basic liberal attitude and liberal mood.

Through all this period there have been millions of genuinely liberal-minded Americans who, though they might disagree on programs, are remarkably unanimous on human fundamentals. They probably have not consciously considered themselves liberals, but they have refused to be stampeded by the shouting sloganeers of any camp into justifying mass slaughter and bloody intolerance with high-minded formulas. Murder remains

horrible in their eyes, even under the most euphonious labels invented by any messiah. Persecution remains abhorrent to them whether it occurs in Germany, Russia or the U.S.A. They believe it is wholly consistent to denounce one type of depravity without embracing another type. They cherish deep-seated misgivings about concentrating immense power in a few hands, whether it is political or economic power, and even when the concentration is achieved for noble purposes. They are convinced, in short, that all the black-and-white, angel-and-devil patterns of thought are so much fodder for human cattle.

The Stalin-Hitler Pact of August 1939, which touched off the Second World War, brought a good many of the misguided liberals to their senses. However, there is still a tendency to condone and explain away the attack of totalitarian rabies. But the need is to face it frankly, to isolate those who have not been cured, to expose those who spread the infection. The need is to separate the liberal sheep from the totalitarian wolves in sheep's clothing. Until that takes place there can be no revival of genuine liberalism as an effective social force.



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## Faith and the Future

*BY MALCOLM COWLEY*

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IN spite of its appeal to deeply religious emotions, Communism is not a religion in the usual sense of the word. Good Communists do not believe in God, or in a future life, or in any mysteries beyond the ultimate scope of human logic. Calling themselves humanists, not superhumanists or deists, they are hostile by tradition to every form of worship from aboriginal totemism to the most enlightened Christian cults. The hostility goes back to Marx himself, and they often quote his opinions as the last word in any religious argument. Marx was opposed to Christianity for two reasons (outside of its falsity, which he took for granted). In the first place, he did not like to see meekness and self-humiliation exalted as high virtues. Proud of himself, proud of the human race, he demanded "the overthrow of all the social relations in which man is regarded as a degraded, enslaved, abandoned and contemptible creature." In the second place, he was angry because Christi-

anity held forth the promise of rewards in heaven, and thus kept people from struggling against earthly injustice. He said very early in his career, "The destruction of religion as the illusory happiness of the people"—in the preceding sentence he had called it their "opium"—"is the necessary condition for the real happiness of the people." Through all the changes in the Communist Party line, this sentence from "The Holy Family" has remained an official doctrine.

But it is a doctrine that has led from the beginning to inconsistencies of conduct. Marx himself, while fighting against Christian morality, was inspired with moral fervor and wrote in a style that often suggests the prophets of the Old Testament; like them he called for justice on the oppressor and promised the return of the golden age. After his death, still other religious traits began to appear in the behavior of the Marxist parties; and this was only to be expected, considering that most of their members had received a Christian or Jewish training and found it natural to seek equivalents for the lost faith of their childhood. The process was at first almost wholly unconscious; but afterwards, in Russia, it was deliberately encouraged by the party leaders in order to strengthen the Communist hold on the peasantry. They seem to have felt the need of providing devotional practices and symbols: for example, slogans like prayers chanted by thousands of marchers, and ikons of Stalin which by 1933 had almost universally replaced the ikons of the saints. In spite of Communist doctrine, Holy Russia had become holier still.

And there is a question whether even the doctrine is

as completely secular as Communists believe. There have been other religions without mysteries, as note the official faith of the Roman republic; even Christianity in the age of Descartes was usually presented as a logical creed that could be proved by the laws of scientific evidence. There have been many other religions that did not promise a life beyond the grave; even Judaism was for a long time ambiguous on this point, and the Sadducees explicitly denied that men were immortal. Finally, there have been other religions that worshiped no god, and this is certainly the case with Buddhism, which consists primarily in the doctrine of salvation by the Four Noble Truths and which, in its orthodox form, does not recognize the divinity of Buddha. Granting that Communism is the only great faith that is lacking in all three of these elements, we can still question whether their absence makes it completely non-religious. Psychologists would say that it leads to definite and even extreme types of religious behavior. Anthropologists would say that it performs the functions of a religion, since it embodies rites and institutions that help to give a whole society the feeling of unity, purpose and confidence in the future. Theologians might say—if they approached the subject with open minds—that some of its doctrines provide a rough functional equivalent for God, heaven and the sacred mysteries.

It is true that the same remarks would partly apply to other political parties and to many movements of reform. The single tax, women's suffrage, birth control, consumers' coöperatives and non-violent resistance have all been described as semi-religious crusades. As Emile

Durkheim said in his *Elementary Forms of Religious Life*, "There can be no society"—and he might almost have added, no group—"that does not feel the need of upholding and reaffirming at regular intervals the collective sentiments and collective ideas which make its unity and its personality. This moral remaking cannot be achieved except by the means of reunions, assemblies and meetings where the individuals, being closely united to one another, reaffirm in common their common sentiments; and this leads to ceremonies that do not differ from regular religious ceremonies either in their purpose and the results they produce or in the processes utilized to attain those results."

In this broader sense, the presence of religious characteristics in Communism is surprising only to the Communists themselves, who as a class are not much interested in anthropology. But there is also a narrower sense in which Communism can be described as a religion. It was founded like Christianity as a movement to redeem the oppressed of all the world, and for nearly a century it has been struggling with Christianity for the loyalty of the masses. The natural result is that it has come to embody more and more Christian elements or equivalents, just as Christianity in the course of its long struggle with Paganism made a practice of borrowing from the enemy in order to defeat him. By now the results of this process should be more widely recognized. In point of creed or doctrine, in point of cult or observance, and in point of churchly organization, there are at present dozens of parallels between Communism

and the various Christian sects.\* Here, for example, are a few of the doctrinal parallels:

Instead of God, the Communists believe in history as a final principle and omnipotent judge. They regard "the great task of making history" as the highest activity open to mankind; it is their equivalent for doing God's will on earth. To be cast "into the dustbin of history" is like being cast into hell.

Instead of Divine Providence, the Communists believe in the Marxian dialectic as the principle that shapes our lives in society. Since the dialectic consists of three parts—thesis, antithesis, synthesis—it also bears some relation to the Christian Trinity; and it is the subject of quite as many learned disputations.

Instead of Divine Grace, they believe in a spirit emanating from the working class; almost by magic it transforms one's doubts and weariness into renewed hope. But if a man rejects this spirit, says Michael Gold in *The Hollow Men*, he suffers "a disintegration of

\* Some of the same parallels would apply in the case of Fascism, the other great political religion. This is partly because most of the Fascist leaders received their early training in Catholic schools, and partly because they copied much of their political organization from the Communists with whom they were struggling. Both Fascism and Communism are theocratic, in the sense that they place temporal and spiritual authority in the same hands. But whereas Communism aspires to be a universal religion like Christianity, and welcomes disciples of all races, the German Fascists have reverted to a tribal faith strangely resembling that of the early Semites. Hitler's German god is like Jahve, the volcano-god whom the Hebrews are said to have followed after the death of Moses (cf. Freud's "Moses and Monotheism"). The German conquest of Europe is conducted in the same spirit as the Hebrew conquest of Canaan, the Promised Land, this being an earlier synonym of *Lebensraum*.

personality and . . . loses much of his humanity, and can no longer distinguish good from evil.”

Instead of Christ, they believe in Lenin the Redeemer, whose body is as carefully preserved in a shrine of pilgrimage as are the pieces of the True Cross. Trotsky for the orthodox takes the place of Judas.

Instead of Holy Writ, they believe in the writings of the Communist fathers, Marx and Engels together having composed their Old Testament and Lenin their New Testament. Stalin may or may not be fitted into the canon; Trotsky is accepted only by heretical sects corresponding to the Gnostics and Manicheans. The proceedings of the Comintern—Stalin once called it “the Holy of Holies of the working class”—resemble the Acts of the Apostles.

Instead of the doctrinal disputes among the Christian churches, they have still fiercer disputes over questions that are sometimes amazingly similar. Thus, the quarrel between Stalinists and Trotskyists was in one of its aspects concerned with the difference between salvation by faith and salvation by works, the Stalinists laying their emphasis on works and the Trotskyists on rightness of doctrine.

Instead of the picture that the Bible presents of the world’s progress—from creation to last judgment to resurrection—they offer another pattern that is not wholly different. The golden age or Garden of Eden which they situate in the past is the communism of primitive tribes. The spirit of evil, the old Serpent, is the impulse toward amassing wealth at the expense of one’s neighbors. The yielding to this impulse is Original

Sin, still present in the hearts of all except the workers, who are the Elect. The world revolution will be Judgment Day, and the heaven to which they look forward is the classless society of the future. That heaven has so often been promised as a consolation for earthly misfortunes and the all too frequent mistakes of party leaders that Communism, too, might be called the opium of the people.

But besides these parallels between Communism and Christianity as creeds, there are others to be noted in churchly organization. The Catholic hierarchy has its counterpart in Russia, and indeed in every country with an organized Communist Party. Instead of a Pope, the Communists revere Stalin, whose rare speeches have no less force than papal encyclicals. Instead of bishops, they obey the members of the Central Committee. The Political Bureau of that committee is like a college of cardinals, with authority to choose a new Pope. The district and section organizers correspond to the lower ranks of the clergy.

The Communist Party itself has no exact equivalent in Christian organization. As a matter of fact, it has varied in size and function, sometimes resembling a religious order and sometimes including almost the whole congregation of the faithful; its nature depends on the tasks of the moment and the policies of its leaders. Thus, in 1930 the American party was small and devoted, having been freshly purged; whereas in 1938, toward the end of the Popular Front period, it was large and full of doubtful elements. But the party in all

countries, and during most periods, includes militant and usually secret sub-organizations that resemble the seventeenth-century Jesuits.

Economically the party is supported like the Christian sects, by tithes levied on its members and by voluntary contributions. In Russia it is the established church and forms part of the governmental structure. In countries where it is forbidden by the government, or is struggling to make a place for itself, it receives help from the Comintern—just as Christian churches in China are supported by the Board of Foreign Missions. As for domestic missions, they are carried out among the Chosen People (not the Jews but the workers) as well as among the Gentiles (who are the middle classes) and the Laodiceans (who are the untrustworthy intellectuals). But the Trotskyists and Bukharinists, being heretics beyond redemption, deserve to fall into the hands of the Ogpu (which has often been compared to the Inquisition, and not without reason).

Russia is regarded by the Communists as their Holy Land, and Mecca has often been used in cablegrams as their code word for Moscow. But actually the parallels are more with the position of Italy and Rome in Catholicism. The old debate over the temporal power of the Pope has been mirrored and magnified in the disputes over Russian interests as opposed to or identified with the interests of the world revolution.

There are dozens of parallels between the two religions as cults, as patterns of conduct to be followed by their members. Almost all the intellectuals who join the



Communist Party think of themselves as being completely detached from religious habits of thinking, completely logical, realistic, enfranchised; and yet without making objections and usually without understanding the symbolic value of what they are doing, they undergo the same rites of indoctrination as if they were joining one of the more militant Christian sects.\* They listen to sermons on the new faith, they study its doctrines, they learn its sacred legends, they sing its hymns—some of which are deeply moving—and they begin to speak its special dialect, which in the course of years has acquired the effect of a sacerdotal language. Having been sponsored by a member in good standing, they are received into the congregation (unless the party is being persecuted, in which case they may have to serve a sort of novitiate in order to demonstrate their reliability). Their sign of membership is the red party-card, which many of them carry in the same spirit that a Catholic carries the crucifix. Some of them receive party-names, the ostensible purpose of which is to protect them from exposure,

\* My father belonged to the General Church of the New Jerusalem, the smaller and more devout of the two Swedenborgian sects. During my boyhood, it had only 1,100 adult members, though it was slowly growing and held to the conviction that it would end by possessing the whole world, except for the hopelessly wicked. This conquest was to be spiritual, not material. In politics most of the Swedenborgians I knew were rather amiable Republicans; it was only their religious beliefs that set them apart as a self-contained and self-conscious community. Twenty years later, at political meetings, I began to recognize a familiar atmosphere. In matters pertaining to the organization and propagation of their faith, many Communists were thinking and talking as if they belonged to the General Church of the New Jerusalem. They looked forward to converting the world. They quoted Marx in the same spirit that my father quoted Swedenborg.

but which also have the religious function of denoting the new personality they have acquired by entering a new world.

Their Sunday now becomes Tuesday evening, when the American party holds its unit meetings. If these are as dull as Granville Hicks says they are, they have an even closer resemblance to church services than I had suspected; and those who attend them can leave with a comforting sense of having mortified themselves in the cause of duty. Then there are the holy festivals of Communism: May Day with its parades and November 7 with its great meetings to commemorate the Russian revolution. There are other meetings that are like public prayers for deliverance or public curses on the infidel; there is the daily round of party chores; there are the entertainments, benefits, costume balls; and in all these activities the new Communists are so deeply involved that they are likely to change their whole pattern of behavior. If they deviate from the party line, they are forced to confess their sins and do penance, on pain of being expelled not only from the party but from most of their social relationships; they would not suffer more if they lived in a Catholic country and were excommunicated. If they follow the party line faithfully through all its curves, they are rewarded with party honors and the admiration of their friends. Meanwhile they feel a deep sense of unity with the struggling masses of all the world—the Russian shock brigaders, the Chinese fighting native and foreign Fascists, the tortured German leaders—and in present tribulations they are upheld by the conviction that the future is theirs. As

Ruth McKenney wrote in an article for *The New Masses*:

Communists today are in the great stream of humanity, brothers to the forgotten men who invented speech, comrades to the Greek architects who discovered form—they sail beside Columbus, and sit in Galileo's studio, they hold the basin for Harvey as he discovers the circulation of the blood, and march with the *sansculottes* to the attack on the Bastille. . . . They have discovered the direction in which production is changing, from the anarchy of capitalism to the logic of socialism. And so Communists can act upon their knowledge, midwives to the future. Communists can make history, and so transcend their lives by knowing the only immortality open to human beings—putting a mark on tomorrow.

I know that Ruth McKenney is not a party leader, let alone being an authority on Marxism, but she speaks with more candor than the leaders and pundits; she reveals the deep religious feelings of the best party members. With this clue, we can understand why thousands in this country became so strongly attached to Communism that they have refused even to consider evidence by which their faith might be shaken (some of them in 1941 had stopped reading the newspapers, which they said printed nothing but lies). We can understand why others retained the Communist frame of mind when they wandered off into heretical sects, all of which continued to be spiritually centered on Moscow; and why still others, while becoming reconciled with bourgeois democracy, insisted on defending it with a fanaticism and unwillingness to compromise that were totally foreign to the democratic spirit; and why still others, who had become alienated not only from Communism but from the whole progressive movement, at last joined other

churches, usually of an authoritarian cast (there were even converts to Fascism) ; and why still others actually suffered from that disintegration of personality mentioned by Michael Gold. They had all formed habits of action and feeling which they could not easily break; there was a void in their lives that had to be filled. In the immediate future, the world must reckon with that pressing need.

## II

I can claim no originality in drawing these religious parallels. Most of them have already been pointed out by others, though not usually in any systematic fashion. A few writers, among them Edward Dahlberg, have gone much farther than I should like to follow. In the last chapter of *Do These Bones Live*, Dahlberg compares the Russian proletariat to "the body of sacrifice which gives dionysiacal rebirth to the fatherland, just as the mithraic bull, identified with the people, was burned and eaten by them so that a total resurrection and oneness could be symbolized." This, it seems to me, is only a picturesque way of saying that the Soviet masses have paid a heavy price for trying to build a happier future; in so far as their sacrifice was voluntary, they were not victims like the mithraic bull, though many of them acted like early-Christian martyrs. But my real objection to most of the writers who have made these comparisons is that they are imbued with the spirit of nineteenth-century scientific skepticism, based on the physical sciences and naïvely ignorant of human society. When they say that Communism has religious elements,

they are implying that it is unscientific, out-of-date and a little ridiculous.

Thus, Edmund Wilson, in a chapter called "The Myth of the Dialectic," \* says that Marx always believed "in the triad of Hegel: the *These*, the *Antithese* and the *Synthese*; and this triad was simply the old Trinity, taken over from the Christian theology, as the Christians had taken it over from Plato. It was the mythical and magical triangle which from the time of Pythagoras and before had stood as a symbol for certainty and power and which probably derived its significance from its correspondence to the male sexual organs." Wilson might easily have added examples of trinitarian thinking from Egypt, Babylon and India, or from the political or the academic world of our own day; or he might have mentioned the triangular situations that are the subject of so many three-act plays and fictional trilogies; the triad is inescapable. To me the astonishing feature of his argument is the unspoken assumption behind it: that anything ancient and almost universal in human thought is by the same token false, the truth being a creation of modern times and scientific enlightenment. It would seem to me more fruitful to examine whether a conception as widely employed as the triad is the symbol of any psychological or social or historical reality (outside of the male sexual organs, which have already been used to explain everything from the Empire State Building to the two thieves crucified on either side of Christ). Likewise Edward Dahlberg,

\* "To the Finland Station," pp. 179-198. This happens to be the weakest chapter in a valuable book.

after presenting in a grotesquely magnified form the religious myths of Soviet Russia, pours forth his pity on poor humanity for accepting them. He asks when man will throw away "his manikin baby gods, the toy buddha dictator, his plaything ikons: the little magical Christmas states, the toy tanks, war games and flags, the infant cubical fatherlands with the doll-house knockers and emblems on the door: the Nazi scarab, the hammer and sickle, the red, white and blue. . . . O, let man laugh the *gods* out of this world, so that the heart can live in it!" Here the unspoken assumption is that the ideal society is composed of independent individuals believing in nothing they cannot see or touch and acting on the principles of enlightened self-interest: in other words, the heavenly city of the Utilitarian philosophers. In Dahlberg's judgment, Russia failed to attain that ideal because it kept a place for gods, symbols and myths.

But the truth, I believe, is quite opposite to what these critics suggest. Instead of being an element of weakness, the religious side of Communism helps to explain its strength and continued life. Although its cosmology, its history, its economics, its sociology, its politics and its picture of the future have at one point after another been brought into question by the experiments and the experience of our own century, its religious force simply cannot be denied. It was precisely because Marx believed in the dialectic as a demiurge and in history as a god working for justice to the working class; it was because thousands sacrificed their happiness and their lives to spread his beliefs; it was because these beliefs were adopted by the Russian masses as a new pentecostal

faith and became surrounded with the myths, the poetry, the symbols of a church—it was for all these reasons that Communism has been able to gain millions of converts, many of whom have maintained their faith in the midst of trials ranging from ordinary social disapproval and economic penalties up to imprisonment, torture, death. No other religion of our times has had so many martyrs; and thinking of the thousands who have died for it in Central Europe, the hundreds of thousands in Spain, the millions in Russia and China (many of them executed for the mere suspicion of having Communist leanings), one doubts that any religion of the past has ever had so many martyrs in so short a space of years. Communism is now showing, moreover, an ability to maintain bitter resistance in the face of the strongest army the world has known—and this summer of 1941, reading fragmentary accounts of the battles waged by the Red Army, the guerillas dying behind the lines, the towns completely destroyed to keep them from falling into the hands of the invaders; reading and comparing these stories with the rather shameful record of the conquered western nations, one finds it hard to criticize the Communists; there are always others to pursue that task.

Yet we cannot judge a religion merely by the number of its martyrs; there are always the survivors to be reckoned with. We cannot judge it merely by its ability to create armed forces, to manufacture planes and tanks, lest we be tempted to believe that if Fascism conquers Communism in battle it will be a still higher faith. A religion must be judged by its capacity to produce admirable lives, not only in times of war and revolution,

but also in the daily relations of society; not only in heroic failure but also in rather humdrum success. And although our data are incomplete, Russia having so far existed in a state of continual crisis, still it would seem that by this standard of judgment Communism is in some respects inferior even to the decayed and diluted Christianity of the western world.

Most writers condemning the ethics of Communism have for years made one charge against it. They accuse it of having adopted the principle that the end justifies the means, whereas the truth, in their estimation, is that ends and means are really identical and good never comes of evil. But doesn't it? These ethical philosophers would speak with more authority if we could be sure that they never—and "never" is a big word—punished their children or told harmless fibs to their wives. When someone shows them a mediocre painting or poem, do they *never* say, "Yes, that's very nice," or even, "I do like that," in the desire to please the painter or the poet?—though certainly they realize that the good end of sustaining his ego is being used to justify the bad means of falsehood. And—granting that many of them are high-principled pacifists and non-resisters—can we be sure that they never eat meat or wear furs or set out poison for mice (or phone the exterminator to come and get rid of them) and never accept money derived from the exploitation of the working classes? *Never* to do or condone or profit by evil while hoping that good may come of it would condemn one to the life of a Hindu mystic (who in turn is doing evil to his own body).



Obviously means and ends cannot be wholly separated, any more than cause and effect; obviously the character of a spy or jailer or policeman, even if he is serving an enlightened government, is going to be influenced by his calling. But for practical purposes, and in spite of everything the philosophers have written, we are left with the daily problem of deciding what means are justified by what ends.

The real charge against the ethics of Communism is that the means or instruments used in attaining its ends are too often living men and women. By habitually treating people as instruments—and on the face of the record, I do not think that “habitually” is too strong a word—it violates a principle which was not given its definitive statement until Kant wrote his *Critique of Pure Reason*, but which nevertheless has always been close to the heart of Christian thought. Christianity sets an absolute value on the individual; Communism has in practice recognized no absolute value except society as a whole, or rather the future of society.

Some results of that practice are written in the history of Russia during the last twenty years, and in the history of the Communist parties elsewhere; even after rejecting the many slanders and questioning all statistics, we are left with a few well attested facts. Thus, we know that individuals in great numbers have been sacrificed to the future of society (and too often without their consent or prior knowledge); they have been lied to and about, used as scapegoats, sent on fatal missions, worked to death in labor camps and starved to death in a famine that was kept secret and therefore went unrelieved for the good

of the state. We know that individuals have been punished for crimes of which they were merely suspected, and even for crimes known to have been committed by others—all the subordinates losing their jobs or their freedom or their lives when the factory manager or government commissar was convicted of treason; and we know that they have been punished for what they thought was doing their duty as good Communists—on the principle, abhorrent to Christians, that the objective effect of an action is to be judged rather than the good or bad intentions of the man who performed it. We also know that all these sacrifices were ordered, and all these punishments inflicted, by leaders acting on what they probably thought was the highest principle of morality, and that their conscious aim was almost always to insure the survival of the workers' state. But the workers' state has become such an abstract principle that at times it seems hardly intended for real workers to live in—pity, kindness, gratitude, friendliness to individuals have not much part in it. One is reminded of a colony of bees, where the sick or wounded members are driven out of the hive to die, lest they spread contagion; there is no law except the survival of the swarm.

And the fact is that a movement like Communism, which lays so much stress on society as a whole, is tempted to paint a somewhat bare and simplified picture of the individual. He needs food, clothing, shelter and sex; he acts in the light of logic and according to what he thinks are his best interests; for the rest, he is either naturally good or else he can be kneaded and shaped into goodness by an all-knowing state that controls the

schools, the press and the instruments of production. That is roughly the conception of the human unit on which Communist policy seems to depend; it is one that was widely held in the nineteenth century. But the Economic Man and the Reasoning Man of the nineteenth-century philosophers have been largely destroyed by later researches into the nature of men's thinking and men in society: by Freud and Pavlov, by Frazer and Durkheim, to mention only four of the pioneers. There is not much place for their discoveries in Communist ideology—except for a simplified form of Pavlov's conditioned reflexes, which seem to be accepted partly because Pavlov was a Soviet citizen. One can read a great deal of Communist literature without finding anything but angry sneers at concepts like the unconscious, associational thought, symbolic and vicarious actions, semantics, cultural patterns, the Oedipus complex or the cult of the dying god—many of which will have to be modified or abandoned, but all of which have been a basis for new studies of human behavior.

And an interesting feature of these studies is that they are leading to a richer and more complicated picture of what Franz Boas calls "the specific characteristics of the human species." It seems to be a species with an infinite capacity for changing itself, but also with an infinite capacity for retaining the same fundamental patterns of action and belief. The same rites appear in Malaya and Mexico and, under new disguises, in Soviet Russia. The same anti-social vices are repeated in new forms—or if finally stamped out, they disappear at the same moment as virtues with which they were somehow

connected. Apparently the progress of the race is not toward the eventual solution of class conflicts or any other conflicts, but rather toward their transformation and reappearance in new fields. And this chain of thought leads one to question whether the classless society for which Communists are working is either possible to the human species or would, if forcibly achieved, satisfy the specific human needs. Perhaps they have been sacrificing men and women to an unattainable ideal. Perhaps the Christian picture of human nature, which recognizes if it does not solve the problem of evil, is not only more emotionally satisfying but also, in the end, more realistic.

There is another weakness in Communism as a system of ethics that has become more evident with the years. It has failed to develop the feeling of human limitations, the personal humility that distinguishes the Christian ideal at its best. It has failed to give a warning against individual pride—in Christian theology the sin of the angels, for which Lucifer was cast out of heaven. Pride was the vice of Marx himself: it led him into those interminable quarrels with Proudhon, Vogt, Lassalle and Bakunin in which he was, quite possibly, right at every point, but certainly wrong in the battle as a whole, wrong to fight it so relentlessly and at such an expenditure of energy and bile. And Marx's pride has come down through the movement as a persistent blemish (though Engels was nearly free of it, and Lenin was personally humble). One result of it has been a series of egoistic quarrels fought unrelentingly and often weaken-

ing the Communist Party as a whole; neither side would admit that it might possibly be mistaken. Another result has been that although Communists continue to act with admirable courage under persecution, they have become personally arrogant when raised to power, and have in many cases been careless of the human units, the human destinies under their control.

And pride, so it seems to me, was the moral background of the great trials in Moscow. To read the printed testimony—and whether any given part of it was true or false does not matter in this connection, any more than it matters to the psychiatrist analyzing his patient and interested fully as much in his fantasies as in his actions—to read that account of unimaginable crimes is to be convinced that everyone concerned in them, the judges and prosecutor as well as the prisoners in the dock, was proud in a way that the few sincere Christians cannot permit themselves to be proud, and that even atheists are kept from permitting themselves by the conventions of a partly Christian society. Thus, the prisoners at the third trial described themselves as having been too proud to admit that they might be wrong when the party was right. They had been too proud to yield when others took their places on the Central Committee or the Politburo: weren't they all quicker and cleverer than Stalin? They talked about history—or those who put the words into their mouths talked about history—just as Dickens' Mr. Podsnap talked about Providence: "He always knew exactly what Providence meant. . . . And it was very remarkable (and must have been very comfortable) that what

Providence meant was invariably what Mr. Podsnap meant." Mr. Podsnap was presented as a comic character, and others who might be like him are kept somewhat in check by the sense of humor that is the instinctive remnant of Christian humility. But G. G. Yagoda of the Russian secret police was too powerful to be laughed at, and there was no check whatever on his actions. To quote from Dr. Levin's testimony about him:

Then Yagoda went on to tell me that widespread dissatisfaction was growing and strengthening in the Party against the Party leadership, that a change of government was inevitable, predetermined and unavoidable, that the movement was headed by Rykov, Bukharin and Yenukidze. And since that was inevitable, since it would happen all the same, then the sooner it took place the better. In order to speed it up, in order to facilitate this process, we had to remove certain members of the Political Bureau and Alexei Maximovich Gorky from the political scene. That was a historical necessity.\*

We can leave unsettled the question whether Yagoda really made these remarks to Dr. Levin, since he must have made others like them; in any case they were the sort of remarks that his successors in the OGPU regarded as convincing to the public and appropriate to the character of a Communist leader corrupted by power. And it was not only the defendants who spoke in this fashion: the prosecutor also thundered against them with a high sense of historical mission and with an utter failure to remember that almost all the prisoners had once rendered heroic services to the revolution; that they were suffering mortals as well as being "counter-revolutionary Trotskyite and Bukharinite spies and saboteurs" who

\* Report of Court Proceedings in the case of the Anti-Soviet "Bloc of Rights and Trotskyites," p. 531.

ought to be shot down like mad dogs. It seems to me that this whole chapter in Russian history, the most deeply disturbing to friends of the Soviet and of human progress, the most fantastic incident of our times, would have been impossible if anyone deeply concerned in the plot—and there was certainly a plot, whether or not it was the one described in the testimony—or if Stalin himself had once stopped to think that he might be mistaken, that he was gambling with human lives; or if he had once exclaimed from the bottom of his heart, “Lord, Lord have mercy on me, a miserable sinner.”

### III

But from all these comparisons and judgments, what are the practical lessons we can draw? What is the experience that can be applied to the desperate problems we are now facing, and to the future for which we have never ceased making plans?

My own conclusions are purely tentative, offered in the hope that others better qualified may criticize or develop them at length. The first would be that some sort of religion is almost certain to be created or revived by any society struggling to survive a profound crisis. It may be a great faith capable of sweeping the world, or it may be merely temporary or local. Often it amounts to little more than attempting to give religious force to some concept like democracy, the race, the fatherland, self-government or more land for the peasants—and the concept may prove to be so empty of real meaning that people who begin by pledging their lives to it frequently end as agnostics. In any case, the religion

will appear if the crisis lasts long enough, and if the society has a will for survival. Without it there can hardly be a full unity of purpose; and the effort to produce unity by rallies and exhortations almost inevitably creates the religion.

A second conclusion would be that such a religion need not be in conflict with science or logic or the most advanced thought of its time.\* It need not involve a belief in supernatural beings or in rewards beyond the grave—the truth being that Communists who believe in neither have shown themselves more devoted and incorruptible than Christians fighting beside or against them. It need not even regard itself as a religion; it can be agnostic or atheistic and wholly contemptuous of the other-worldly faiths. No matter: the religious practices will appear in spite of its efforts. As soon as it has martyrs, it will have its sacred myths. As soon as it holds meetings where crowds are raised to a frenzy of devotion, it will have its rituals and symbols of devotion. As soon as it embarks on wide-scale action, it must furnish an ethical guide to action. And as soon as it sets out to make converts, it will be organized as a church.

But a third conclusion is that, if the rituals are introduced as it were by stealth and shamefacedly, they will be less expressive and less satisfying emotionally than the rituals of older churches. The ecclesiastical organization will exercise political power, leaving not much room for human freedom. And the ethical system, if it de-

\* The conflicts between Communism and science have appeared since Marx's death. They have resulted partly from recent changes in the direction of scientific studies, partly from the religious conviction among Communists that Marx was infallible.



velops haphazardly, may permit some of the anti-social vices to flourish unchecked, and may lead to the infliction of widespread suffering in the name of the common good.

A fourth and last conclusion is that the present crisis, for the Western countries, is religious as well as military. This is the subject that Lewis Mumford treats in his "Faith for Living"; and though he sometimes goes to dangerous extremes, I now think that he is justified in his chief contention. "Fascism," he says, "is a diabolical religion, a religion of Yahoos; that needs no demonstration today. But still it is a religion; and this means that it has the capacity of every living religion to integrate action, to create a spirit of willing sacrifice, to conjure up in the community that possesses it a sense of its collective destiny which makes the individual life significant, even in the moment of death. . . . One cannot counter the religious faith of fascism unless one possesses a faith equally strong, equally capable of fostering devotion and loyalty, and commanding sacrifice." The lack of such a faith is what explains the aimless fashion in which France fought the war and the sudden collapse of the French armies at a moment when their material resources were far from being exhausted; its presence helps to explain the bitter resistance of the Russians. Of course the faith has been supported in Russia by modern weapons and a more intelligent military policy, but also in a sense it created the weapons and directed the policy. Without such a faith in England and the United States, it is hard to see how Hitler can be stopped in the West.

But if it is needed in order to defeat Fascism, it will be needed even more in the new crisis almost certain to

follow a victory. Hardly anyone now believes that Germany can ever return to the ideal of democracy misrepresented by the Weimar Republic; or that France can go back to a government of professional vote-getters bargaining with one another behind the scenes; or even that the United States can successfully revive Mr. Hoover's doctrinaire individualism. All those systems are bankrupt, not only politically but morally as well. They put too many burdens on the individual: the burden of economic and emotional insecurity, the burden of wandering among conflicting theories without ever knowing one's own direction, above all the burden of being spiritually alone. The political religions, for all their faults, at least create a sense of living in common. And that is the reason why very few of the former Communists (not to mention the former Fascists) will ever make good bourgeois democrats; they have come to believe that their religion was false, but they are hopelessly lost without it. Most of them will unconsciously seek a new faith, and not only that. Like the Russian peasants weaned away from their churches, they will seek equivalent duties and rituals and symbols; and many of them will end by finding the ikon of somebody or other to replace the ikon of Stalin. That search for equivalents seems to be among "the specific characteristics of the human species."

Already there are indications in books and lectures and newspaper columns that a religious revival is getting under way. Already we can see that it will not be lacking in dangerous tendencies. It seems to be leading to a great deal of vague and ecstatic language, a tossing

about of eternities and immensities, an abuse of phrases like "sacrifice," "consecrate," "bestial foes," "our fathers" and "the American way of life." Such phrases can be used again, as they were often used in the past, to justify measures that will lower American standards of living, to consecrate the profits of the patrioteers and to make sure that the deeds of sacrifice are performed by others. Moreover, the emotional appeal of such phrases—much greater than their logical content—is always in one direction, always back to the simple faith of our childhood, back to the little brown church in the wildwood and the old-time religion, back to the narrowness as well as the supposedly stern virtues of our fathers. There are signs among our prophets and preachers of good old-fashioned priggery, of intolerance, militant nationalism, prejudice against foreigners, anti-feminism and hostility toward labor unions, not to mention a disposition to regard privation—if suffered by others—as being good in itself instead of being a temporary evil. One can also see signs of the eighteenth-century fallacy—now revived in Vichy—that religion is "needed for the masses," who should be trained in Christian piety, whereas the rulers are permitted to live in a state of secret skepticism. But tendencies like these are not an integral part of religion. The preachers and prophets might best avoid them by practising Christian humility.

Rereading Durkheim's book on the origins of religion, I found a passage that casts not a little light on our present confusions. Durkheim's theory, not accepted

by American anthropologists, though some of their work seems to take it for granted, is that religion began as the worship of society and that the first tribal god was the tribe itself. Applying this theory to modern times, he says:

If we find a little difficulty today in imagining what these feasts and ceremonies of the future could consist in, it is because we are going through a stage of transition and moral mediocrity. The great things of the past which filled our fathers with enthusiasm do not excite the same ardor in us, either because they have come into common usage to such an extent that we are unconscious of them, or else because they no longer answer to our actual aspirations; but as yet there is nothing to replace them. . . . In a word, the old gods are growing old or are already dead, and others are not yet born. This is what rendered vain the attempt of Comte to create a religion by artificially reviving the old historic memories; it is life itself, and not a dead past, which can produce a living cult. But this state of incertitude and confused agitation cannot last forever. A day will come when our societies will know again those hours of creative effervescence in the course of which new ideas arise and new formulas are found which serve for a while as a guide to humanity; and when those hours have once been passed through, men will spontaneously feel the need for reliving them from time to time in thought, that is to say, of keeping alive their memory by means of celebrations which regularly reproduce their fruits. . . . There are no gospels that are immortal, but neither is there any reason for believing that humanity is incapable of inventing new ones.

Durkheim adds that the question of what symbols the new faith will choose to express itself, and whether they will resemble those of the past, "is something that surpasses the human faculty of foresight." Writing in 1912, he could hardly have foretold the cult of Lenin's tomb or the German paganism preached by Arthur Rosenberg, not to mention the creeds and sym-

bols still to be created. There are, however, a few predictions that can tentatively be made on the basis of Durkheim's theory.

The new religion, if one is adopted by the West, will not be Marxian Communism. Some of the reasons for this statement I have already offered. Nor will it be the religion of science that has often been suggested as the fitting expression of this age. Science is a guide to action, the best tool we possess, but except for scientists themselves it is not an incentive to action. The scientific virtues of patience and skepticism are not virtues in a crisis, when people have to act on faith. And although science can study a faith, compare its dogmas with others, even help to preserve it by suggesting new arguments in its defense, it cannot create a faith that is lacking.

There is some chance that the new cult might be a revival of Christianity, which is superior in ethics and in psychological insight to any of the religions that have tried to supersede it. But the churches, both Catholic and Protestant, have become identified with the society that is now dying, and there would have to be a change in them as drastic as the Reformation and the Counter Reformation. It is hard to believe that any of them are capable of the necessary effort. Another possibility to be considered is the growth of some new Christian sect; as yet it has not appeared.

The new faith might be the religion of humanity that has for a long time been developing in the West. It has never been reduced to a set of doctrines, but its creed would include such words as freedom, equal opportunity, tolerance, human perfectibility, progress by

reason and the sacredness of the individual. It is the faith instinctively held by most American liberals. Its practical weakness is that it has never been able to create an organization for itself, has never become a church—though efforts in this direction were made by the Jacobins with their Cult of Reason and later by Auguste Comte. For this reason it is usually powerless to act in a crisis.

There is still another possibility to be considered. The faith of the future might prove to be something that none of us desires and many would die to prevent: it might be a national religion based on the notion that white Anglo-Saxons are of all peoples the best qualified to rule over the earth and that they should immediately proceed to its conquest. By the law of polarity, the law that makes opposites resemble each other, this country might be led in its struggle against Fascism to adopt the essential Fascist doctrines.

Perhaps more than one of these possibilities will be tested by the future, but which of them will conquer, and for how long, are questions that once again "surpass the human faculty of foresight." There is, however, one thing we can say with reasonable certainty about the better society we hope to see after the war. If it is to be more than a Utopian incident, if it aims to survive the present generation, it will have some sort of religion. It will have its supreme being or principle of being, its meetings for worship, its rituals, its holy symbols; it will have men who—perhaps under a different name—perform the function of priests. And more than this can be said. If it is to be a planned society, then its

religion will also have to be planned, no less carefully than its economic system or its governmental structure. Otherwise it will be in large part under the planless control of habits, instinct and tradition. Its real goddess will still be Chance.

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## Liberalism and the United Front

*BY ROGER N. BALDWIN*

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THE assorted middle-class intellectuals who constitute liberal leadership have always exerted their major influence through more dynamic groups. The very differences inherent in their liberalism, ranging all the way from center to left, make them incapable of acting with any telling degree of unity. To act they must find allies in more closely organized movements. Most great struggles for the extension of liberty have been marked by a union of some strong section of liberalism with the self-interest of a class fighting for its own advancement. An indispensable trend of these historic struggles is always the alliance of forces differing sharply in their ultimate goals, but agreeing on the accomplishment of immediate ends.

These united fronts, formulated as a political tactic only in recent years, have marked great revolutionary crises and most struggles for freedom. They constitute the means by which new forces, feared and persecuted, bridge the chasm between the established order and



their goals. Their liberal supporters are the bridge, standing in the processes of social change between the defenders of the status quo and the forces challenging it. They proceed on the assumption that liberty and democracy, their touchstones, are promoted mainly by the expanding power of new classes breaking the bonds of entrenched institutions. Whether liberals accept or deny the Marxist analysis of economic class interest is immaterial. They act as if that theory were the central dynamic of progress, however much they qualify it.

The historic function of liberalism is to interpret the new to the old; to defend it against persecution; to act as a shock-absorber in class strife; to attack injustices; to destroy faith in privilege and to establish the moral bases of equality and liberty. The liberals prepared the moral and intellectual foundations for the French Revolution and they helped to lead what was, until the counter-revolution, a peaceful change from feudalism to new political and economic freedoms. They performed the same function in the Russian revolution. In all lesser revolutions the liberal intellectuals have played their role of softening the old to make way for the new. That they have been often engulfed by the very forces they aided to power, when fresh consolidations succeeded the old, is an evidence not of their naivete, but of the inability of men to avoid the temptations of power.

Yet, recognizing the risks of new tyrannies, the liberals have acted on the belief that social progress is achieved only by the organized and determined self-interest of larger and larger classes seeking for themselves the liberties which some form of autocratic control

denied. They have championed the advance to political democracy and private capitalism from autocratic feudal rule as the basis of a power established not by Divine right, birth or priestly privilege, but by the people themselves. But these freedoms, they know, create, as they have in every democracy, new ruling elites. They recognize them as the freedoms of the gambling house where only the few can win, but in our democratic order the chances at least are vastly greater. This is some progress. But it does not satisfy ideals of liberty and democracy, nor ethical concepts of brotherhood.

The fluidity of the liberal position, its lack of dogma and its preoccupation with immediate issues give it its force and its influence in a social community. The charge that liberals don't know where they are going but are on their way is, in fact, a compliment. The essence of social progress is to be on one's way. To know exactly where you are going, save in a general direction, is to subscribe to Utopian dogmas which explode under the pressure of events with the finality that has marked the end of a dozen Marxist sects. When liberals define a precise and ultimate goal, when they adopt a dogmatic body of tactics, they usually move over to another camp. Thousands of them have thus moved into Communist, Socialist or Anarchist sects, but they no longer function as liberals. Their influence as liberals demands freedom from any "isms," but active participation in the struggles for freedom.

That active participation is achieved most effectively in direct alliances. Liberals do not seek out alliances, but they are receptive to the appeals of various organi-

zations and political wings who have an immediate, common purpose. The Communists in recent years have sought liberal support frequently. Every movement of liberation has sought allies among active sympathizers in order to command influential support in its disinterested appeal to principle. In no period more conspicuously than in the last twenty years has the united front as a tactic thus enlisted more liberals in more countries or for larger purposes. The very disunion of the forces of progress in these two decades of declining radicalism and ascending reaction has made imperative their search for a common base of action. Communists have been the most conspicuous promoters of the united front; but Socialists, peace organizations, civil liberties and pro-democratic middle-class movements have promoted them, too. They have achieved even the dignity of governments in the popular fronts of France, Spain and Chile. Universally their common denominators have been the drive for peace, for expanded political democracy and industrial democracy and for the national independence of colonial peoples. Universally they have fought against war, fascism, imperialism and militarism.

Though the record of the united front and the liberals in the face of the superior forces of fascism and war has been one of universal failure, the method has proved sound in principle as the only practicable means of uniting popular forces with any chance at all of overcoming reaction. Even under the repressions of wartime the pattern of the united front emerges in one country or another. Despite its failures its power holds the promise

of success for the future. Its errors of strategy and organization demand study. No discouragement with the collapse of the Communist united fronts dominated by the shifting policies of the Soviet Union should blind us to the merits of the structure of unity. But the experience raises immediate issues: who can unite? on what basis? by what tactics? and for what ends?

Of all the objectives which most readily unite the liberals, the fight for civil liberties takes first place. In every democracy middle-class organizations of varying strength have united diverse elements on a common platform of the political rights necessary to keep open the highway for peaceful progress. And in every country these organizations of the middle-class have been preoccupied with issues raised by repression of labor and of minority radical groups. Inevitably they have been characterized as pro-labor and pro-radical, however loudly they professed their disinterestedness. The personnel of all such organizations in all countries has been dominated by liberals sympathetic with the extension of the democratic principle and therefore hostile to established privilege. But no others to the conservative right of them have been willing to fight for democratic change. Defense of democracy by economic conservatives has been a myth.

Some of the civil liberties organizations have frankly created, in effect, united fronts with those whose rights they defend. The National Council on Civil Liberties in Great Britain, a powerful organization led by distinguished English liberals, is a membership federation whose backbone is the trade unions. It reflects in the

field of civil liberties the unity created by the British Labor Party between liberals and labor. Unlike the British Labor Party, it makes no distinction in its membership, accepting Communists individually or through organizations. Yet it has no Communists in its leadership, quietly recognizing the fact that they are out of place. Its policies are therefore not essentially different from those of the American Civil Liberties Union, which has formally excluded Communists from its governing committees, though admitting them to membership. But it differs sharply from its American counterpart in its virtual alliance with labor. The difference is to be explained by the long tradition of liberal and labor unity in political action in England as against the contrary history in the United States, where labor seeks no such alliances.

In France, before the collapse, the largest and most important of all civil liberties agencies in the world, the French League for the Rights of Man, brought together the traditional middle-class supporters of the ideals of the French Revolution. Its locals were the active forces maintaining in every French town, however insignificant, the function of political democracy. It excluded Communists, but defended their rights. It had no alliances with labor. But it defended the trade unions vigorously. When the French Popular Front was created the President of the French League for the Rights of Man was the unanimous choice for chairman by all elements. More than that, the French League led the European movements dedicated to the concepts of libertarian democracy established by the French Revo-

lution. The International Federation of European Leagues, with its seat in Paris, represented the dominant liberal leadership in every European democracy struggling against the tide of fascism and reaction. Even in exile, as one country after another came under the fascist yoke, they maintained their work and encouraged by their leadership the parties of labor and the left.

These middle class organizations, in cooperation with labor and political groups of the left, not only fought for civil liberties, but for the organization of peace. They were staunch supporters of the League of Nations while it offered any hope. They supported the peace pacts and collective security. A large part of the European Socialist and trade union movement joined with them. The Communists, dedicated to the disruptive tactics of the united front from below, stood aloof until the period of the popular fronts, from 1934 on. But the long and bitter struggle between Socialist and Communist leadership, each playing for liberal support, had weakened the unity of the anti-war and civil liberties groups and contributed to their eventual collapse. The liberals, impatient of those rivalries, constantly strove, though too feebly, to rise above them and to unite them on a common program under liberal leadership.

The Communist perception of the readiness of liberals to act as an amalgamating force inspired what was probably the most influential of all recent united front efforts,—the League Against War and Fascism, later, in the United States, the League for Peace and Democracy. Originating at a conference in Brussels, it

brought together Socialist, Communist, trade union and middle class leadership as no movement for peace and against fascism had done. As an active participant in the work of the League, both abroad and in the United States, I was in a sufficiently objective position, since I was not a fellow-traveler politically with the Communists, to gauge with fair accuracy the methods and relationships of a Communist-inspired united front in action.

The first problem which the Communists faced was how to accomplish through others what they could not accomplish themselves. They needed men of reputation as leaders. The Communists had always had in their ranks in countries all over the world men of personality and resourcefulness not known as Party members, who could be trusted as liaison workers. Men of international repute in science, literature and the arts were not unaccustomed to being called upon for moral sponsorship of movements for liberty and peace. And they were all of course bitterly anti-fascist. With one or two enlisted it was not difficult to line up a formidable array. Maxim Gorky, Albert Einstein, Romain Rolland, George Lansbury, Henri Barbusse (though a party member, a literary figure with a wide audience) all signed the call of the League. With such European backing it was easy for Communist representatives working through unidentified party members or sympathizers to enlist the support of the leading liberals. The distinguished sponsorship got the League off to an international start. Even Lord Robert Cecil graced its platform. Its centers throughout the world became at

once the most active promoters of collective security as the guarantee of peace, and of the internal struggle against fascism. Non-Communists predominated in its leadership everywhere. Communists were safely entrenched in the secretariat, furnishing the initiative and driving force. From the Communist point of view, as long as the secretariat was in party hands it made little difference how broad was the united front for it gave the Communists assurance that no action hostile to party interests would be carried out. They could put the emphasis where it suited them. They had the world-wide organization, the discipline, and the long view of how to fit the united front with ultimate Communist purposes. The liberals and non-Communists, lacking equivalent organization, discipline or purposes, even though they greatly outnumbered the Communists, could bring to bear no such driving force. But they were able constantly to check any Communist trespasses outside the common platform by threat of resignation. The Communists in united fronts were always willing to compromise to escape disruption. As long as Communists did not differ too sharply with non-Communists, co-operation was reasonably harmonious. They accepted the decisions and leadership of the non-party liberals who were everywhere the League's chief spokesmen.

The alliance worked until a dramatic shift in Soviet policy wrecked the League in a few short weeks. The Nazi-Soviet Pact of 1939 obviously made further united struggle impossible against fascism, split the League support, and drove it into confusion. The Finnish invasion gave it the coup de grace.



The liberals in the Communist-inspired united fronts should have learned from previous experience that their houses were built on the shifting sands of Soviet policy and were likely to collapse at any moment. Many of them had been through the experience a few years before of the one other international united front of promising significance inspired by Communists,—the League Against Imperialism. Created in 1927 by another great conference at Brussels, it united European labor, liberals and the left with the anti-militarist movements of the colonial countries, and with liberal leadership of international reputation. In an amazingly short time the largest of the nationalist organizations were enlisted—the Indian Nationalist Congress, the Kuo Min Tang, the Moslem nationalist movement in the Near East, the independence forces in the French colonies. For the first time in history the colonial masses struggling for national freedom were represented in a single agency, powerfully supported by European labor and the intellectuals of Europe and the Americas. Hope everywhere rose for a united attack on imperialism. The League's executive committee represented every element, with only a single Communist among them. But that Communist, as in other united fronts, was the secretarial key figure in charge of administration. When non-Communists raised the political issue of the secretary's partisanship, they were answered that the indispensable co-operation of Comintern representatives throughout the world made a Communist secretary desirable.

Unlike the later League Against War and Fascism,

in which for a short time Socialists were also represented in the secretariat, the League Against Imperialism was staffed by Communist partisans. But the members were assured that Communists would behave like non-Communists. For a while they did. Modestly they concealed themselves behind the official leadership and faithfully executed the common program.

After a few years of conspicuous success a shift in Soviet foreign policy wrecked the League. That shift, not so dramatic as the Nazi-Soviet Pact, was quite as disastrous. Its cause was the defection of the Kuo Min Tang in China, which threw out its Soviet advisers, and went over, as the Communists saw it, to the imperialists. How could you depend on nationalist movements led by bourgeois leaders who refused to follow a revolutionary policy based on the needs of workers and peasants? Could they depend for uncompromising struggle on the Indian National Congress, led by Gandhi, the pacifist who made no class distinctions? Obviously in Communist eyes they could not. At once the League was manipulated to fit the new line. The leaders of the bourgeois nationalist movements, the European intellectuals and liberals who would not go along were dropped from positions of influence by one device or another. Their places were taken by so-called working-class representatives with no influence outside Communist circles. Some of the leaders who could not be replaced in a hurry were formally expelled in meetings packed by Communists, who though in a minority, created for the occasion, as they know so well how to do, the necessary majority. The subordination of the

League to Russian policy, apparent to all, ended its usefulness and shattered the hopes of unity aroused all over the world. The League became a mere shell giving sanctuary to a few Communist functionaries. Even the name vanished in another few years.

Less significant Communist-inspired fronts than these two great international movements have followed the same pattern. Whether they have been actually dominated by Communists or not is immaterial. But it is to be noted that the withdrawal of Communist support in response to a shift in Soviet policy has always split or wrecked them.

Communists have been able to ally with themselves no sizable party or organization capable of sharing leadership to create a unit of real power. One of the chief sources of weakness in these united fronts, preventing their survival after Communist changes of policy, has been the partisan control of the administrative machinery. No genuine united front action is possible unless it is directed by non-party elements or by a combination in which Communists do not dominate. Communist leadership tends to circumscribe activity within the orbit of their own techniques. They cannot reach out into those wider areas on which united front success depend.

There is some indication that in recent years Communists have learned from experience that monopoly of staff and mechanical control of meetings in a crisis do not promote even their own purposes. They learned by experience the fallacy of the "united front" from below when they found they could not detach the masses from their leaders. They learned the lesson of compromise

well enough to make pacts with Socialist and other rival elements not to attack them on the issues of the united front while both faithfully carried them out. Since the Nazi-Soviet Pact and the defection of liberals from the united front they have learned even more. They have learned that open Communist participation is fatal to the influence of the movements they support. Their united fronts have therefore taken on the character of membership organizations without the participation of known Communists. They have withdrawn in favor of trusted fellow-travelers who can be depended upon faithfully to reflect party policy. So stereotyped have become the lists of liberals with party sympathies that the identification of movements which are in fact Communist-inspired is everywhere apparent at first sight.

But the liberals as a whole have abandoned Communist-led enterprises. Not even the participation of Russia in the war is likely to recapture an allegiance shattered by the lessons of subservience to Soviet policy. Rather the liberals will ally themselves, as in England and the British Commonwealth, with those forces creating unity on a basis of labor's aspirations. In England the initiative and drive comes from the trade unions and the Labor Party. Communists co-operate, but on terms laid down by others. Increasingly it is apparent that only on such a non-sectarian basis, unrelated to the foreign policies of another nation, can unity be achieved. International struggle waits upon a common denominator established not on the basis of the national interests of Russia, but on objectives shared equally the world over. It seems not improbable that the outcome of the

war will find the Soviet Union following the international leadership toward these objectives of the democratic forces in the British Commonwealth and the United States rather than attempting to play its earlier revolutionary role in behalf of universal socialism.

To many liberals, the collapse of the united fronts is a matter of small concern, particularly in the United States where the parties of the left have made little progress and hold no substantial stake in the trade union or farmer movements. But in Europe, where organized labor has been long dominated on the political front by Socialist or Communist leadership, they have had a vast significance. Among liberals the world over, seeking the dynamics of social advance in unity, they have created a belief in their strategy out of all proportion to their net influence on the more substantial movements of labor and farmers.

But it is not these private organizations and the alliances they represent which have primarily tested united front strategy. The essential test has come in the popular fronts of those liberals and political parties represented in the governments of France, Loyalist Spain, and, today, of Chile, and, in more fragmentary form, in a dozen other democracies. These popular fronts rose to the heights of governmental responsibility to unite all divergent forces engaged in the common program. No liberal could have witnessed the upsurge of mass support which marked the popular front in France without feeling a thrill of hope in the triumph of democracy over reaction. It was a sentiment of unity so complete that the self-interests of each party and

group were subordinated to the common platform and the accepted leadership. Everybody in France to the left of center enthusiastically supported it. The liberals led it. Socialists and Communists fraternized. The Communists did not seek to monopolize its machinery. Modestly they assented to a place proportionate to their numerical strength.

The collapse of the popular front government through its caution, its fear of arousing counter-revolution, and its subordination to Britain are all matters of history. But there was nothing wrong about its structure nor the stated aims it did not fulfill. In the race with reaction it lost to forces more daring, more powerful, more entrenched.

But if the French Popular Front failed, the Spanish Popular Front achieved a near-success. Only superior arms in the hands of the united fascist front best them, together with the desertion of democracies dominated by appeasers. Liberals everywhere grasped at once the significance of the Spanish struggle in the fight against fascism, confident that its success would not only mark the turning-point in the struggle but avoid a general war. Except for the pacifist fringe of liberalism, they everywhere supported the struggle for the Spanish government by sending goods, medical aid, and soldiers. The International Brigade included not only Socialists and Communists, but young men whose ideals of democracy and liberty alone promoted their sacrifice. In the United States a working united front was at once created to aid the Spanish cause composed of official representatives of the Socialists, Communists, liberals and a few

trade unionists. Every element represented in the Spanish government found its counterpart here. If the Communists were more vigorous than others here as they were also in Spain, they did not in either case unduly dominate popular front policies, though they often confused and compromised them. Only after the catastrophe did the American united front, like the popular front itself, break up into two rival bodies, one following fairly closely the Communist line, the other an uncontrolled democratic liberalism.

While no comparable popular front of the large political stage has developed in the United States, embryonic alliances in politics have reflected the same forces. We have witnessed their rise in local labor parties, non-partisan leagues, commonwealth federations (on the Canadian model) and farmer-labor combinations. Periods of New Deal advance have been marked by almost united support by the same forces which constituted the popular fronts abroad. New Deal liberalism has leaned for its fighting power on labor and the Left. In other countries of the Americas similarly, the struggle for democratic advance,—notably in Canada, Mexico and Chile,—has been led by combinations of liberals, labor and the Left.

Evidences of the same tendency come from further afield in the Australian political movement which has created its labor governments; in the labor and Socialist government of New Zealand; and in the near-Socialist governments in Scandinavia. The drive for the extension of democracy in all the democracies over many years has found its major dynamic in these combinations of

progressive forces, with the labor movement at their core. Up to the war, increasingly they constituted either the government or the leading opposition.

It is reasonable to conclude from this evidence that the wave of the future will roll in on the tide of democratic advance after the war. It is, in a fairly accurate sense, a revolutionary wave, for it rests like all genuine revolutions on the transfer of power and control from one economic class to another. If class outlines are somewhat blurred in the transition from capitalism to collectivism, it is still basically true that the interests increasingly served are those of the producers and distributors of wealth, not the owners of property. The process is sufficiently advanced to give validity to the claim that the only determining choices before the world are whether the inevitable collectivism is to be achieved and maintained by dictatorial authority or by democratic power. If the resistances of reaction to change in democratic countries are to be overcome peacefully, the only power capable of so formidable a task is coercion by a government in the hands of a popular coalition representing the overwhelming majority. We can fairly conclude from the experience of popular front governments, that they will create the forms of necessary power.

Possibly alternative means to effect the transition may be found, short of government coercion, in the adjustments forced upon world economy by the conduct and outcome of the war. Such a hope evoked Harold Laski's plea for a capitalist "revolution by consent." This is unlikely of realization.

But whether the transformation of our democracies is



achieved by one means or the other, coercion or necessity, the problem of liberty is likely long to confront us. For the expansion of public powers in a state controlling so vast an area as our entire economy raises at once the questions of how those powers are in turn to be controlled, and to what degree the accustomed liberties of a democracy may be sacrificed in the process. It is in this critical function of social evolution that liberals may be counted upon to exert their major influence. For as the entire history of their participation in the greater movements of social progress indicates, their guiding passion is directed to preserving personal and civil liberties. No goal seems to them superior to those liberties by which men freely express their needs and desires, create their cultures, and associate together for their common interests. To them, the State, like all institutions, was made for men and their freedoms. They will not yield to any claim, however good, however temporary its sponsors allege it to be, which sacrifices to autocratic authority the practice of liberty.

Their view is not the dogma of a few. It lies deep in the desires of men the world over. But the liberals see better than those who accept for the moment some higher goal that liberties once surrendered, even in a good cause, may be the authors of new tyrannies. They have learned that even forces on which they count for progress, and with which they unite, serve goals above liberty. They quite understand the enormous difficulties of reconciling liberty with collectivism; of creating an organization of peace to protect democratic advance which will not rest on the privileges and power of dominant nations; of pre-

serving from crystallization in some powerful authority the processes of social growth.

From these observations of the function of liberalism it follows that the attitude it represents must dominate both international and domestic settlements if democracy is to survive as the discipline of progress. If we leave aside the factor of arms and assume that power will tend to continue its development along the curves already established, the indications are not without considerable hope. The preservation of the substance of democracy in Britain in war-time, its rapid growth in the United States from political to industrial and economic forms, its firm roots throughout the British Commonwealth and in the colonial world, all are encouraging evidences. And in all of these countries, as in others before the war, the striking fact to be noted is that the initiative and driving power for democratic advance arose from coalitions of labor, liberals and the Left. Under the necessities of the economic crisis, and pushed by these advancing forces, governments have grown in power to a point where they, not private capital, are in a decisive position in the conduct of our economy. It is this combination of governmental controls and democratic support which promises a power sufficient to overcome reactionary resistance to change, and to avoid new autocracies.

The degree to which change can be effected by peaceful means after the holocaust, and the degree to which essential liberties can be sustained to guide it, will depend in large part on the vigor and influence of liberalism, and its capacity to impress its values at strategic points and moments on popular democratic forces.

PART 2

THE FUTURE SOCIETY



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## Is Democracy Possible?

BY JAMES BURNHAM

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I SHALL discuss in this essay the prospects of democracy. The problem is given in the following historical setting:

During the 18th and 19th centuries, democracy advanced broadly on a world scale. Democratic governments developed in many nations, including many of the world powers; the degree of democracy was increased in nations where it had already existed. By the end of the 19th century, more human beings were living under democratic political forms than ever before in history. The opinion was widely held that the growth of democracy was destined to continue until, before very long, the entire world would be democratic. In the 20th century, however, the curve leveled off. Not long after the First World War, it began to drop rapidly. Democracy ceased to spread, and one after another nation that had been to one or another extent democratic, abandoned democracy. The new trend, holding without interruption for two decades, suggests *prima facie* that

democracy is on its way out, for the next historical period at least. This suggestion is strengthened by the reflection that social phenomena, such as democracy, seem to vary in long-range rhythmic movements in history, and by the observation that despotism rather than democracy has been the more usual form of political organization.

Before turning to our problem, it is necessary not merely to recall the past but also to make a rough estimate of the future development of society as a whole. The prospects of democracy cannot be weighed without understanding them in relation to the general social structure.

I have elsewhere (in *The Managerial Revolution*) outlined the view, which is by no means mine alone, that world society is at present in the midst of a social revolution through which capitalism is being replaced by what I call "managerial society." Managerial society is to be characterized by state control and subsequently ownership of the principal means of production, and by a ruling or dominant class made up chiefly of the managerial and administrative groups, working together with politicians and military men (who are always to be found among the ruling classes in every form of society).

The details of the theory as I have presented it are irrelevant, and unnecessary, here. It is enough if the perspective is recognized as (1) a considerable degree of collectivization and centralization, through the state, of the means of production; and (2) a ruling class (or ruling classes) made up in large part not of private capitalists—and not of the masses of the people in an

ideal "classless society" or "proletarian dictatorship"—but of the managerial and administrative groups (those now functioning as industrial managers, labor bureaucrats, government administrators) together with political leaders and soldiers, combined in any of several possible inter-relationships. Put this way, the evidence before us seems to me nearly conclusive that a transition of this general kind is taking place, and that it will eventuate in a social structure along such lines. Furthermore, I believe that, in spite of great differences in terminology, rhetoric and moral overtones, there is agreement among many sociologists and historians and political scientists that this is what is happening at the present time.

I am, however, going to assume—since it will not be granted by all—that this general perspective is so much more probable than any other that for practical purposes it may be accepted. That is: I shall assume that the practical social alternatives now available may be discovered only *within* this perspective. We thus rule out of consideration not only many ideal aims that might orient successfully the lives of particular individuals, but also such social ideals as the retention of private capitalism or the traditional ideal of socialism as a free, international, non-exploiting classless society. This does not mean that social groups may not espouse one or the other of these ideals, as they are doing and will doubtless continue to do. The assumption is simply that if they do organize in terms of such ideals they will not get what they want, that the results of their actions, uncontrolled by their ideals, will in any case contribute to

one or another solution within the boundaries of the "managerial" perspective.

My special problem now is: granted this general perspective, is democracy possible and likely within it?

## II

Those of us not gifted with the insights of a MacLeish, a Mumford, a Dorothy Thompson, or an editor of the *Nation* or the *New Republic* are obligated to give a comprehensible meaning to the terms we use, in this instance the term "democracy." By etymology and tradition, "democracy" would seem to be associated with "rule by the people," "popular sovereignty," or something of that sort. However, I do not think a definition along those lines is particularly useful, especially in connection with the problems of the present time. Popular sovereignty, rule by the people, are, after all, myths: societies are always ruled in fact by minorities, and will presumably continue to be. Moreover, even if popular sovereignty were not a myth, how could it ever be determined when any particular society exhibited it? Many despotisms in history, including despotisms of the present, which no one would call "democracies," can claim to represent the popular will as plausibly as many nations that everyone agrees in calling "democracies"; no one could settle disputes, because there is no objective test for popular rule.

It is more pertinent to make the test for "democracy" the right of public political expression for oppositions, together with those auxiliary rights that implement and guarantee this primary democratic right: assembly, free



press, access to organs of public opinion, right of minority organization, a measure of juridical security in the exercise of these rights, and so on. That this definition is more appropriate than any starting from ideas of popular sovereignty is seen in the fact that we say "democracy" is overthrown in a nation when these rights are eliminated, and it is easy to observe when they have been eliminated. This definition is the one we use in practice, even if we do not formulate it explicitly.

It is not necessary to carry such a definition to abstract extremes. No society has ever granted these rights fully, to everyone and under all circumstances, and it would be absurd to expect that any ever would. When the democratic rights are limited, as they always are, it is possible for the rulers to abuse the limits, as they always do; but this does not mean that it would be beneficial if the rights were granted 100%. The democratic right of free speech is not the right of libel and perjury nor the right of every crackpot to say what comes into his head: and this in spite of the fact that the rulers will always tend to employ restrictions against libel and perjury and crackpotism as a means for silencing legitimate opposition. If we cease expecting utopia, it becomes possible to make reasonable distinctions of degree: and a democracy limited and abused is more democratic than no democracy at all.

This conception of democracy as basically a question of the protection of opposition rights, in particular the rights to public political expression, does not seem very inspiring, and it might be wondered why anyone should be much concerned over its fate. There are, however,

two undoubted, and one probable, consequences of democratic political structure that, if understood, might be made grounds for valuing it:

(1) Democracy best enables the ruled, the oppressed—that is, the great majority—and the “outs” among the ruling classes to bring pressure to bear against the rulers, and thus serves to restrain at least somewhat the always present tendencies of the rulers toward tyranny, undue privilege, and extreme exploitation.

(2) Democracy (in this sense), in any field of activity, alone permits the free investigation, discovery and checking of scientific truths, since scientific hypotheses can be tested only when contrary hypotheses can be advanced without any limitations from force, authority, prestige, decree, or any other criterion than the relevant evidence. It is not self-evident that scientific advance is invariably beneficial to society; but in any case those who are interested in scientific advance in the fields of politics, history and society, either for its own sake or because they believe it will benefit society, are logically bound to favor democracy.

(3) It is probable that a democratic structure, by providing more opportunity for development, articulation and ambition for those outside the immediately ruling clique, is, at least in the long run, better adapted than despotism for releasing and utilizing social energies and individual talents. It can hardly be doubted that democracy, as compared with despotism, possesses the first two characteristics I have listed. I am by no means so certain about this third. A properly qualified conclusion would perhaps have to be that democracy is better able to

release and utilize energies and talents under some but not all historical circumstances; sometimes despotism can do better. And despotism does seem to provide more scope than democracy for some kinds of energies and talents. However, democracy permits the expansion of a greater variety, among them a number, hindered by despotism, that would generally be regarded as of benefit to society.

Hereafter I shall use the word "democracy" in the sense that I have defined.\*

### III

Democracy does not come about just because a few or many persons have sentimental attachments for the word "democracy," and become excited when they use or hear it. For democracy to exist, certain conditions must hold. In the first place, the general social structure must be of such a sort that a democratic political system is at least possible within it, if not favored by it. Second, large numbers of men, or at least of decisively placed men, must have traditions, attitudes, interests or policies the effects of which promote or at least preserve democracy. The prospect of democracy for the next historical period may, then, be examined by trying to find out whether these two conditions are to be expected.

The type of institutional structure which favors democracy appears to be one in which there exist in

\* I do not, let me note, say that "This is what democracy *is*," a statement that is unintelligible. I merely say: "I propose to use the word 'democracy' in the sense that I have defined." Any other word may be substituted, so long as the definition is retained.

society a number of relatively autonomous social forces,\* with no single social force so outdistancing the others that it can absorb, crush or neutralize them. When Church or wealth or arms or labor or whatever it may be so exceeds in power all other forces that it is capable of absorbing them or of dominating wholly any or any combination of them, then democracy is either ended or on its way out.† All organized social groups, under one or another formula, strive to advance their position of relative power and privilege. Feelings of benevolence, philosophic or religious doctrines, are never sufficient to exercise any serious restraining influence; it is only the power of other social groups that restrains. When the

\* I use this term in roughly the sense given it by Gaetano Mosca, and draw on his analysis in the present connection. A "social force" means any organized set of human activities that functions significantly in society—wealth, labor, religion, military skill, science, education, land, and so on.

† When this condition for democracy is stated, it may seem so obvious as to be a mere tautology. There is, indeed, no great disadvantage in regarding it as part of the definition of democracy. Nevertheless, it is not in fact implied logically by the definition I have given above. It is perfectly conceivable that one social force should be *capable* of absorbing all others without doing so, or even should actually absorb them without then denying democratic rights. Not only is this conceivable. Many theoreticians hold that this is just the way to get "true democracy." For example, the Catholic Church in the Middle Ages tried to absorb all other social forces, and in certain places and times succeeded in doing so. Many Catholic philosophers today believe that this would be an ideal solution for our own social problems; and that under such a social structure democracy could and would flower. Again, Marxists aim at the absorption of all social forces by the "workers' state"; and they say that such a state would be "the most democratic known in history," not to speak of its leading rapidly to the ultimate democracy of socialism. There are even Stalinists who say that the Soviet Union under Stalin has been a "true democracy," the truest ever known (which may be, since it has had nothing in common with an ordinary democracy). However, though such ideas are conceivable and have been conceived, they are completely refuted by the facts of history.

Church, for example, manages to bring under its own integrated control not merely religious activities but a large measure of educational, political, military, and economic activities as well, democracy cannot endure; public opinion, the Inquisition, law and the stake silence oppositions that go beyond narrowly circumscribed and harmless limits. So likewise if the too-dominant force is the military or any other.

Democracy is thus fostered by a conflict among social forces, a conflict which is unresolved in that no single social force gains full dominance over all the others. It might almost be said that war is the extreme form of democracy; that democracy is war without shooting and without definitive victory to any belligerent. The view, very common in recent years, that democracy is bred by peace and indolence—is a “luxury product,” an indulgence for rich “have” nations, but too expensive for the lean, hungry “have-not” nations—though it has an initial plausibility derived perhaps from the metaphors in which it is expressed, does not accord with historical experience. Athens, in the early days of its democracy, was far poorer and hungrier than many simultaneously existing states: in the Near and Middle East, in Africa, and in Greece itself. Rome changed from the Republic to the Empire and despotism just as it was entering its richest and most luxurious period. In the 13th century, the Florentine state was the most democratic in the world; but Venice, Genoa, Rome, Milan, not to speak of the Eastern Empire and several of the Moslem states, were richer and more “sated” at that time. The luxurious periods of the Asiatic empires and of Egypt (so far

as we know) did not breed democracy. For that matter, it is hard to see just how modern Germany was leaner or more "have-not" than Switzerland, the Scandinavian nations, or Iceland. The whole theory is little more than a backhanded apology for despotism.

Also wrong is the view that democracy is nourished by "harmony" and "national unity"—two objectives which rulers of democracies always call for and notoriously never get. In the real world, where different men have different interests and conditions and talents, a "unity" that is more than a temporary cessation of disputes for the sake of some immediate common practical end can only mean that one social force has succeeded in absorbing or crushing the others, and thereby the prerequisite of democracy.

In spite of the incompleteness, inadequacy and hypocrisy of much of capitalist democracy, an unbiased observer can hardly deny that the capitalist social structure provided more of a basis for political democracy than any other social system so far known. Democracy went further and extended to more persons and territories under capitalism than ever before in history. Among the reasons for this is the fact that, though under capitalism the wealthier capitalists were certainly the dominant section of the ruling class, and institutionalized capital the chief social force, nevertheless there remained in capitalist society other groups, other institutionalized forces, which maintained a certain autonomy, which were not wholly absorbed by capital, and which together were able to balance to some degree the power of capital. Labor exercised a very consider-

able counter-pressure. The Church—even in most countries where the Church was nominally bound up with the state (though Russia would be an exception here)—was a strong and partially independent institution. The state, though often subordinated to the capitalists, had some life and strength of its own. A modified feudal group survived in many nations. Science, becoming institutionalized, had independent interests and powers.

Even more important, the very economy of capitalism, through competition, private ownership, lack of integration, provided a basis for a measure of democracy apart from the non-economic social forces. The major branches of the economy—heavy industry, light industry, agriculture, domestic industry, export industry, etc.—had divergent interests and through their conflict tended to check each other and to give substance and vigor to oppositions. In fact, private ownership itself provided a foundation for opposition (and thus for democracy). So long as the “rights of ownership” were upheld, the capitalist opponent of prevailing opinion had a certain security when he expressed his contrary opinions—at any rate he could not easily be cut off from livelihood as a result of the expression.

This relationship between private property and democracy was recognized by Thomas Jefferson. When he argued for an economy of free farmers as the best basis for democracy, he was making this same point that democracy cannot rely on good intentions, but must have some solid foundation. His democrats, stating their views, had always their own farms to support, with food and shelter, their right to opposition.

The development of the present and the prospect for the future are the centralization and collectivization of at least a large percentage of the economy—this percentage including the chief industries and services—through the state. This change threatens to remove the institutional conditions for democracy. It does so because through it the state—the integrated set of institutions constituting the state, and the persons who run these institutions—tends to absorb most or even all important social forces, to be left without an effective rival, to be subject to no check based on anything firmer than hope. It must be stressed that this threat is independent of the personnel that happens to command the state. It does not matter whether the chief official posts come to be occupied by “labor men” or military men, bureaucrats or priests, teachers or lawyers or speculators. The threat results from the changing institutional relations, not from the particular personnel of the moment: from the fact that the state today is tending to outweigh any and all other organized social forces, and thus to deprive democracy of an institutional foundation. Any doubts, on theoretical grounds, that this is the case may be removed by reviewing the history of the past generation.

We must conclude, if we wish to face the truth, that the present direction of institutional change and its predictable outcome are unfavorable to democracy. Are they such as to make democracy impossible?

It does not seem to me that the institutional development makes democracy impossible. It is argued by most of the spokesmen for capitalism, and conspicuously by



Wendell Willkie in the 1940 Presidential Campaign, that the way to preserve democracy is to return to an earlier stage of capitalism, of "private enterprise." There was much good sense in what Willkie said, when his remarks are stripped of the "campaign oratory" to which he later referred. He observed that present tendencies were moving toward the end of democracy and of capitalism; he wished to preserve both; they had been associated in the past; therefore let us return to the past. However, this solution, practically speaking, is impossible. If democracy depends upon the preservation of private enterprise, of capitalism in anything like the forms heretofore known, then democracy is through. Every indication is that private enterprise is going to disappear, at least in large measure, that the state is going to take over the control, management, and in the end the ownership of the major portion of the economy.

However, government and the management of the economy do not include all of the actual or potential social forces in society, nor does the management of the economy comprise all even of the economic forces. There remain the Church, education, science, art, for example. Economically, labor, and to some extent even consumption, are at least potentially separable from management and ownership. The control of major industries and services does not necessarily involve control of all industries and services; lesser industry and agriculture might quite conceivably be organized independently of the collectivized structure of major industry. No one of these forces, presumably, would compare with the state of the future. Yet a number of them, retaining

autonomy, functioning at least in part independently of the centralized state apparatus, might provide that conflict and check that are the sole institutional guarantees of democracy.

In the process of absorbing management of the economy, the state tends to absorb all the other social forces as well, as largely happened in Russia and Germany. But this does not have to happen. Granted modern technological conditions and social attitudes, there seems no way to avoid the state centralization and collectivization of the economy; but it is at least possible that the complete merger of all social forces in the state, the *totalitarian* state, could be prevented. In fact, autonomy of social forces might to some extent be achieved even within what would look like the state framework. It is only when the state apparatus is closely integrated that totalitarianism can exist. An institution called a "state institution" could in actuality be partially independent of other branches of the state. This has often been the case with the Church in nations where the Church is nominally an official state affair. It has been the case at various times in the history of this country, when the Supreme Court, for example, has been representing one social force (slave-holders, let us say) and Congress or one branch of Congress another. The Fathers of this country tried to write "checks and balances" into the *form* of government; the checks were real when the form was expressing real divergences in social forces. Similarly, even if there were no "separation of powers," even if executive bureaus nominally exercised all sovereignty—as may well be the case—in

the forms of the governments of the future, nevertheless, if there were a real autonomy of divergent social forces, there would in fact be checks and balances of a kind that would make democracy possible.

#### IV

The conclusion, from the point of view of the institutional conditions for democracy, is that the probable institutional structure of the future is unfavorable to democracy, but not such as to make democracy impossible. This conclusion gives special import to the question of the second set of conditions required for the existence of democracy: namely, the traditions, policies and attitudes held, and the types of activity practised, by individuals and groups. Since nothing in the institutional structure guarantees democracy, though the structure does not rule it out, democracy's survival will depend upon these traditions, attitudes, policies and activities. Moreover, since the institutional structure will be on the whole unfavorable to democracy, the attitudes and activities will have to be more than neutral, will have to be positively weighted toward democracy if democracy is to have a reasonable chance.

It is a fact in the United States at present that the word "democracy" expresses and stimulates, among all sections of the population, favorable sentiments and emotions. So completely is this association established that there is not a single social group of any size, and hardly any individuals, that do not proclaim their loyalty to "democracy," and make use in their propaganda of the sentiments attached to the word. This

is as true of Republicans as of New Dealers, of fascists as of communists, of capitalists as of workers, of interventionists as of isolationists, of Browder as of Lindbergh as of Roosevelt. All are for "democracy"; and this is enough to show that the sentimental attachment to the word is without any significance for our problem. Democracy is in no way helped—or injured, either—by the character of the emotions surrounding the word "democracy." What we must examine are not the verbal emotions, but the actual attitudes people have toward the thing, democracy—that is, toward a political structure in which the rights of oppositions are protected—and the nature of the proposals they put forward and the actions they carry out that have a bearing, one way or the other, on the thing, democracy.

Do people in this country really want democracy? It may be that a majority of the people, in a vague way, does prefer democracy to despotism; but it is very doubtful that a majority or even a considerable minority wants democracy as much as a number of other things. It is doubtful that the masses of people have ever, here or elsewhere, placed an extremely high valuation on democracy. The immediate effects of democracy are of direct concern, for the most part, to politicians, intellectuals, and the leaders in the various lines of social activity. For the masses, the comparative benefits of democratic government, if there are such benefits, are mostly indirect. It seems certain that the masses are more stirred by, for example, patriotism; and that they value security, both material and moral, much higher than democracy. It is likely that, indirectly and in the

long run, security is better protected by democratic than by despotic government. It is more difficult for mass pressure to be brought to bear, under despotism, to curb the excesses of the rulers; and the individual is less protected against arbitrary violations of his security. But these relations are by no means obvious and are thus not convincing in terms of mass psychology. Moreover, despotism has a certain advantage over democracy in being able, often, to give a kind of easy illusion of security—after all, even a prison or a poor-house provides its own sort of security.

The ambiguity in the term “democracy,” especially the overlapping of the definition I have given it and the more common definition through notions of “popular sovereignty,” is also of disservice to democracy (in the sense I employ). Despotism can become established as representing the “will of the people,” and thereby can, rather convincingly, keep democratic slogans. This has happened often in history, in our own day and in earlier times. The periodic despots in Athens surged up on popular movements, and spoke in the name of the masses. The Medicis set up their tyranny in Florence as spokesmen for “the people,” in particular for the *popolo minuto*—the lowest classes. Nor did Kemal Ataturk or Stalin or Hitler forget the method.

If we turn from the masses to, for example, the capitalists, it is easy to observe that these latter are much more concerned over the preservation of their property rights and the attendant privileges than over democratic rights; indeed, they systematically confuse democratic rights with capitalist property rights, just as their op-

ponents confuse the preservation of democracy with the abolition of capitalism. The aim of maintaining the capitalist property rights is futile under the given circumstances; but the confusion between these rights and democracy is another blow at democracy; for democracy becomes popularly identified with capitalism, and thus, as capitalism becomes more and more disreputable, there is a tendency for democracy to decline in prestige along with it.

In general, the various sections of the present and potential ruling groups, of the "élite," are more interested in power than in democracy. Democracy may be, in their eyes, a useful instrument for the attainment of power; but it can become a dangerous threat to the preservation of power. That is why, as we have seen, democracy continues only on the proviso that no one group is able to get "all power."

I wish, however, to examine more carefully some of the attitudes now held, and positions now taken, by those who regard themselves, and are regarded, as the chief defenders of democracy: the liberals, New Dealers, "radicals" for that matter; in short, nearly every section of articulate public opinion except the open, die-hard Tories and conservatives. Are these attitudes and positions such as to promote democracy? We know in general what the test will be. If their effect is to hinder the fusion of all social forces into one integrated force, to further the autonomy of diverse and non-integrated social forces, then they promote democracy. If, on the contrary, their effect is to encourage concentration of all social forces into one, to weaken the autonomy of

varying social forces, then they undermine democracy and promote despotism.

## V

### *Labor*

Many of the professional democrats believe that the existence of democracy depends upon the personnel that occupies the positions of chief social power. In its most naive form, the belief is that democracy must have Roosevelt elected President, or Willkie or John L. Lewis or whoever it may be. More sophisticated opinion makes it a question not of single individuals, but of the social group from which the leading officials of society are drawn. In order to have democracy, the government must be made up of farmers or business men or brain-trusters, or—and this last is the view now widespread among liberals and radicals—of “labor representatives.” To preserve democracy, they say, “labor must come to power.”

This way of thinking is erroneous; and the errors are of a kind that prompt actions that lead away from democracy. It may be granted that the personnel of the official political leadership is not without its effect upon historical change, especially upon the allotment of privileges. But, whatever the effects in other fields, it is fairly clear that this whole matter has little to do with the existence of democracy. Democracy depends not upon who holds the public positions of power, but upon the condition that no person or integrated group holds an overwhelming portion of social power. There might

be, doubtless would be, significant differences between capitalist despotism and labor despotism, Roosevelt despotism and Willkie despotism, Church despotism and military despotism, managerial despotism and farmer despotism. Perhaps one or the other of these despotisms is the most desirable form of society. They would all, however, be despotisms; and such despotism will be instituted if any one of these groups gets overwhelming power into its hands in a situation where the other groups cannot function more or less autonomously to check and bridle.

This is as true of labor as of any other social force. Anyone who believes that there is a peculiar affinity between "labor" and democracy should be able to raise a few doubts by considering the internal history of the labor movement. Almost all established labor unions and all political parties based on labor have a despotic inner regime. The government in the Soviet Union, after all, the most despotic in all history, is the only example so far of a clear-cut "labor state."

Historically, the struggle for "more power to labor"—which means in the concrete, of course, more power for the bureaucrats and politicians who base themselves upon mass labor organizations—has, on the whole, contributed to democracy. This, however, is not because "labor" is mysteriously more democratic than other social forces, but for the following reason: In the early 19th century, labor was a comparatively minor social force. During the course of the century its power vastly increased, without its ever overwhelming the power of other social forces. Labor, developing thus as an autono-



mous social force, contributed to democracy by acting as a more effective check on other social forces, especially on capital. That labor should be powerful, and very powerful, undoubtedly aids democracy; that labor should be all-powerful would destroy democracy as surely as that any other single social force should be all-powerful. Perhaps it would be better if labor were all-powerful; but that is only another way of saying that it would be better if democracy were eliminated.

From these considerations follows the fatuousness of so many judgments that liberals make nowadays, and so many policies they advocate. To take an important example: it is usually said that the "election truce" agreed on shortly after the war began by the British Labour Party and the Conservatives in England, and the entry of the labor men—Bevin, Morrison, Attlee—into the British government were important "victories for democracy." Nothing could be further from the case. These moves in reality indicate a great lessening of the autonomy of British labor as a social force, a tendency toward the absorption of labor by the state, which is characteristic everywhere in our age as a phase in the development of totalitarianism. British labor would have contributed to democracy, and contributed greatly, if it had remained steadfastly *outside* the government, if it contested publicly and clearly each by-election with the Conservatives, if—granted cooperation in the war—it cooperated as an independent and major force on its own account, collaborating for limited practical joint aims but preserving at each step its own integrity. These same remarks apply to the entry of Hillman into

a top agency of the state apparatus in this country, and to the proposals for further steps along these lines.

Democracy now requires a strong labor movement; but requires equally that the labor movement should not be dissolved into other social forces. It would make no difference whether, in appearance, labor took over the other social forces (as, nominally, happened in Russia) or another took labor over (as, nominally, happened in Germany). In either case, democracy falls.

### *The Church*

Religion is still a major social force, and in all probability will continue to be into the discernible future. During the past several years it has become the fashion among a number of the professional democrats to attack religion, and especially the Catholic Church, as "fascist in tendency" and anti-democratic. This has been marked in discussion of the Bertrand Russell case, and in connection with critiques of the revival of neo-Thomist philosophy.

Here, too, the error of liberal opinion is profound. The reasoning that leads to the view that the Catholic Church in this country is anti-democratic is based primarily on two considerations: first, the fact that in many past centuries and in certain nations today (Italy and Spain, notably), the Church has either itself ruled despotically, or been closely associated with despotic rule; and, second, the implications of certain Catholic theoretic doctrines—in particular, the valid implication from Catholic theory, confirmed by practice, that where

an effective majority of a nation is Catholic, the Catholic religion should be compulsory for all. Those who reason on such bases, however, fail to understand, (1) that the Catholic Church in the United States does not and doubtless never will constitute an effective majority—is, on the contrary, an incurably and hopelessly minority grouping, and (2) that complex implications of theological doctrine are not what decide political and social structure.

Let us grant that Catholic doctrine is, at least in implication, anti-democratic; and grant further that many Catholics in this country are themselves actively anti-democratic, in belief and action. From this, however paradoxical it may seem, it does not follow that the Catholic Church in this country, as an organized social force, is anti-democratic in influence. The truth is the opposite. The Church is an important factor contributing to the preservation of democracy in the United States. This follows, not because of any theological nicety, but because the Church here is in fact a relatively autonomous social force, has no chance at all of becoming an overwhelming force, and by the nature of its position—including its international ties—is committed to a struggle to try to preserve its autonomy against other more powerful social forces. The Catholic Church is, whether it wants to be or not, a considerable obstacle to United States totalitarianism.

From the point of view of the future of democracy, the current “democratic” attacks on the Church in this country are a waste of time (though they may be valuable from other points of view—scientific enlighten-

ment, for example); even more, when, as often, they tend to limit the Church too strictly or deny it an adequate sphere of operation, the attacks definitely undermine democracy by weakening an institutional obstacle to despotism.

### *The War*

All groups in this country seem to agree that the future of democracy is bound up with the war; the dispute occurs between those who say that getting into the war will destroy democracy as against those who are equally sure that staying out will destroy democracy. This somewhat ironic difference should indicate what is probably the case: that the existence of democracy is not dependent upon going into or staying out of the war.

It should be apparent that the defeat of Hitler would not guarantee the survival of democracy; nor would his victory in the present phase of world war in and by itself necessitate the disappearance of democracy in this country. It is true that democracy is, for the time being at any rate, wiped out in those nations that Hitler conquers. But this is not really the problem for the United States. The United States is not threatened by conquest. What is at stake for this country is its relative position in the new world political system that is now being built with the usual bloody tools: whether the United States is to hold first place, one of two or three equal places, or slip to second rank.

More generally, it may be said that Hitler is rather a manifestation than a primary cause of the threat to

democracy that follows from the major trends of historical development in our time. These trends include a series of structural changes in social organization that, as we have seen, undermine the institutional foundations of democracy, and, furthermore, a weakening of attitudes and policies that favor democracy. These trends are operative in all advanced nations, and are present in the United States independently of Hitler.

It must be confessed that the interventionist-isolationist dispute is somewhat academic. The United States is committed to the world conflict for first places in the new world political system. The only practically efficacious arguments concern the ways and means of conducting the struggle. The isolationists, though perhaps shrewd politicians in their exploitation of certain sentiments strongly felt by a large section of the population, are absurd so far as their ostensible position goes.

The effects of the war, however, are by no means irrelevant to the problem of the survival of democracy. The war crisis (even apart from shooting) deepens and speeds the general trends already present in society during the past generation, and in particular that aspect of those trends which is most unfavorable to democracy. Everyone recognizes the habit of war regimes to abrogate usual civil rights and democratic procedures, with the excuse—far from confirmed by experience—that only dictatorships can fight wars properly. This, however, is the lesser half of the story. Modern war, total war under modern conditions, provides the setting in which whatever group happens to be in control of the war regime can most easily destroy the autonomy of all other social

forces, and thus do away with the social foundations for democratic government. An abrogation of civil rights that leaves the foundations not seriously altered can be a temporary measure, capable of reversal when peace comes, as has happened in the past. If the foundations for democratic government are themselves ruined, then peace, whatever other blessings it might bring, would not include democracy among them.

Here, also, the attitudes and policies of our professional democrats are of uniform disservice to democracy. Most of the democrats are interventionist; they say that the main and first job is to defeat Hitler. That may be; perhaps the defeat of Hitler is the best and most important goal now before mankind. Such a reflection is not, however, here in question. We are analyzing the status of democracy. There are plenty of war-mongers; but there are very few genuine democrats—very few, at least, who put democracy as the first and dominant of their political aims. Most of our professional democrats, by their conduct with respect to the war, show that they are not to be counted among them.

The “natural” effect, as it might be called, of the war conditions is to destroy the foundations of democracy. Those who put the war first and are ready to sacrifice all else to the war contribute to the natural effect. This the most honest of the isolationists perceive, and in reaction they retreat into a dream of their own. Let us grant that it is not necessary for consistent democrats to oppose the war. From this it does not follow that they should, as our professional democrats do, jump into the propagandistic vanguard of the war party. It does not

follow that they should be the quickest to call "traitor" those who differ with them, to demand that all social forces should be submitted to the control of the war regime. Our professional democrats not merely support the war; they are the loudest in supporting those very accompaniments of war conditions that most weaken the institutional foundations of democracy. If the main object were indeed democracy, and even if it is further granted that fighting the war is not merely compatible with that object but necessary to it, the truth would still be under the given circumstances that the chief efforts of those who want democracy should not be to fight the war. There are others, not overly worried about democracy, to lead the war; and, besides, they will be leading it, after their own fashion. The first task for those who put democracy first would be to resist the trend toward the destruction of the conditions of democracy, above all the swallowing up of all autonomous social forces under the war regime's slogan of "national unity" that, as things stand, will mean in the concrete, "national despotism."

### *The State*

At all points of political development, the main enemy of democracy is not any particular man or group of men, but always the most powerful social force, whatever that force may at any given point happen to be. Where the Church is most powerful, it is the Church; where the military is most powerful, it is the military; and similarly with capital or landholders or labor or even, in some hypothetical situation of the future, the

organized body of scientists. Each social force tends toward the relative increase of its own power; the most powerful force, especially if it considerably exceeds any other, is the one with the best chance of crushing or absorbing its rivals, and consequently of destroying the conditions for democracy.

If we rid our minds of mistaken analogies from the past and of the abstractions of inappropriate theories, it is perfectly plain what the most powerful social force is in our day: it is the state, the closely integrated set of institutions that constitutes the modern state. This has often, perhaps usually, not been the case in the past. In primitive forms of social organization, the state is not a separate institution. In many more advanced civilizations, the state, as an independent institution, is weak or limited, little more than an adjunct to one or another of the main social forces. Today the state has become, in all advanced nations, by far the greatest of all organized social institutions. It tends everywhere toward totalitarianism, which means simply the crushing or absorption of all other major social forces by the state. The state, thus, is incontestably the main enemy of democracy in our day.

Here, too, we may see the real consequences of the attitudes and views of the professional defenders of democracy. Far from encouraging the reinforcement of actual and potential social forces in independence of the centralized state apparatus, the professional democrats ordinarily do just the opposite, and count each absorption by the state of another sphere of national life as one more "victory for democracy." They will learn in this



country, as they have in others, what this means for democracy when there appears or develops at the top of the state apparatus a group prepared to utilize, all the way, the means that have been placed at their disposal by, among others, these same professional democrats.

## VI

This brief analysis has shown that attitudes and policies widely held at the present time do not contribute to democracy in their effects, but help weaken democracy and prepare for despotism. Since the institutional analysis showed that the structural changes in modern society, though not excluding democracy, were unfavorable to its existence, the only possible conclusion from the entire examination is that democracy is unlikely to survive.

If we grant that this must be the conclusion on the basis of present trends, it is legitimate to ask whether there is any reason to suppose that the direction of these trends may change in such a way as to increase the likelihood of democracy. A discussion of this possibility would lead me into arbitrary speculation, or into questions of program, neither of which herein concerns me. However, it seems possible to make the following very brief observations:

There is little evidence that a change of direction might occur in the case of the general institutional structure. Society is headed for centralized state control of the economy, with the state run by some combination of the managerial, bureaucratic and military groups, and that is about all there is to it. We cannot be so sure,

however, of the persistence of present attitudes and policies.

As a matter of fact, there may well be something artificial and strained in the existence of totalitarianism as the political form for a highly developed civilization. The advance, division and multiplication of labor, technology and knowledge create a social situation in which men and groups of men have, in actuality, different interests and ends. Some of these interests necessarily conflict; others can be reconciled and compromised while at the same time they remain distinct. Totalitarianism eliminates the surface expression of these divergent interests, but it does not eliminate the conditions of life that account for the divergences—to do so it would have to return to an impossibly primitive cultural level. Democratic government seems to provide a more adequate framework for the existence of the divergent interests, for their reconciliation and even for their conflicts—which last are not always to the detriment of society. If this is indeed the case, then it may be that the totalitarian governments will not be able, for any long period, to dam up the divergences, which will burst through into the mild anarchy of democracy.

And, if this is the case, it means that in those nations still retaining something of democracy, there are more solid causes than rhetoric to shift the attitudes and policies of many groups into a changed direction that after all will alone permit most of them to survive: all losers have a stake in democracy, and there are always more who lose than who win. It would be unjustifiable, on the evidence, to believe that this change of direction will

surely come about, or even that it is very probable. It is at any rate more than a mere possibility.

But if we put the question in the popular form, "Will democracy win?" there can be little doubt that the answer must be, No. Democracy can never win. Democracy always loses, because the forces of democracy, in winning, cease to be democratic. Those who want democracy, therefore, must be willing to lose.

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## The U. S. and the U. S. S. R.

BY BERTRAM D. WOLFE

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**A**N OPTIMIST is being currently defined as one who believes that the future is uncertain. The jest suggests the terror that haunts our time.

All through the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries confident expectation continued to mount with the rising indices of production and swifter means of communication. Man was visibly winning his long war for mastery over nature. Victory was to release mankind from the perpetual scramble for animal survival and liberate his energies for the development of the specifically human. Nor was it to be, as has been lightly charged, a merely materialistic paradise of things. "The economic riches of a people do not properly consist in the abundance of goods," wrote Pius XII in his famous encyclical, "but in the fact that such an abundance represents and offers the material basis sufficient for the proper personal development of its members." And at the opposite pole of contemporary life, Karl Marx was writing that, with the coming of socialism, "the period of *human* history" would begin.

But now that the earth has shrunk to the proportions of a single world community and the productive capacity for abundance has actually been achieved, the most advanced states expend marvels of ingenuity in the artificial perpetuation of scarcity and claw at each other for the exclusive possession of the shrinking earth. Confident advance breaks down into frantic defensive to hold on to the fragments of the disintegrating past. Bluster and slogan, peace without plans and war without specific aims or even perspectives, cover reluctance to peer further into the future. Were it not pitiful it would be comic to see how one group takes refuge in the term "inevitable" to avoid analyzing the problems of direction and desirability, while another seeks comfort in the mere denying of the term's legitimacy. Yet one must be blinded by fear or short of sight indeed not to see that all the signs and requirements of our time point to some deep transformation already under way, while, within wide margins, they still leave to be determined, its exact nature. Thus the "inevitable" and the "contingent" are inextricably intermingled.

Inevitable was the end of free competitive capitalism: in fact it has already ceased to possess the main heights of our economic topography. Its very mechanisms worked out in such fashion that they begot its opposite: monopoly. Inevitable, too, was the decline of the *laissez faire* relationship between government and business as political centralization developed along with economic. Local government has been visibly dwarfed by centralized government in the United States; the division into separate national economic units has become an impos-

sible anachronism in Europe. Bureaucracies, budgets and deficits grow swollen in all lands; executive powers gain at the expense of policy-making legislative bodies; great combinations of capital bring governments and peoples into their titanic world conflicts; the governments in turn assume larger and larger powers in the economic sphere for the purposes of sustaining scarcity, operating "unprofitable" branches of the economy, and organizing national life for competitive conflict.

Inevitable was the coming of the day when the capacity for the production of abundance would strain at the leash of the profit-through-scarcity economic structure, when any one of a half dozen major powers could by itself supply all the "effective demand" of the globe and utilize all the available raw materials, when the huge combinations of capital would begin to merge with the super-states in various possible degrees of dominance or subordination, when even production for profit would have to be subordinated to the uses and requirements of total, all-absorbing and—as immediate perspectives suggest—continuous war.

No thinking person any longer dares dream that the present war, however it ends and whatever it issues into, will restore the free-competitive, *laissez faire* world of the nineteenth century, or permanently "Balkanize" Europe again into petty states criss-crossed with bristling tariff and armament walls. Even conservative Britons talk of some sort of union of Europe or of the world, of a new order, of the revolution that at least partially coincides with the present war.

All these changes, "inevitable" in the sense that they

were a natural outgrowth of the laws of free-competitive capitalism, "inevitable" too in the sense that they have actually gone too far to be reversed, add up to the fact that capitalism is ended and that some new socio-economic organization of society must take its place. This "new order" which is being shaped by the foreseen and unforeseen consequences of our actions and failures to act, can be conveniently summed up under the term: "some sort of collectivism."

The ambiguity is deliberate, for here, it seems to me, is where "inevitability" passes over into "contingency." What is not inevitable—at least not yet—what has not yet been determined by the history which is even now being made by our generation, is the exact nature of the collective society which is to take the place of the order that is ending. Still to be determined is the degree to which the new collective society will be controlled from above or below, the degree to which it shall be plutocratic (with a few gigantic combinations of capital owning the state and the people), auto or bureaucratic (with the state owning the industries and the people) or democratic (with the people developing sufficient understanding of and interest in the complicated affairs and issues of modern economy to control the administrators of the state and industry and determine the major issues of policy).

In other words, both a democratic socialism and a bureaucratic, totalitarian, super-state capitalism—with many variants in between—have become economically feasible. And since the old is outgrown and is actually drifting in a general direction common to all these vari-

ants, some one of them has become economically necessary. It seems to me that the possibility of choice is by no means closed, though the situation is so weighted, especially by the gigantic wars of our period, that mere drifting will tend to reinforce the less desirable and diminish the chance of the more desirable outcome.

## II

To be sure, we have some reason to be skeptical of our power to determine the outcome, since our first inexperienced efforts have led to unforeseen and unwanted consequences. In little more than a generation we have seen our attempts to curb the trusts end in the fostering of monopoly; comfortable pacifism lull men to sleep while war was preparing; a crusade to safeguard democracy by military means spread militarism and totalitarianism; a professedly liberal and democratic government (both in 1916 and in 1940) deliberately withdraw the overshadowing issue of war and peace from decision by the people; a socialist movement that was to prevent war—or failing that, was to use the ensuing crisis to end the war-breeding system—itsself support the war and crush the movements of protest, then disintegrate as a consequence. Worst of all, we have lived to see the Russian Revolution, which was to bring peace and world brotherhood, socialism and freedom, end in the blind alley of a totalitarian, slave-state economy with widening inequality and stratification and a foreign policy undistinguishable from the usual pursuit of national self-interest.

This last and most disheartening experience has de-



moralized not so much the mass of our people (though much more so in Europe than in America) but rather the progressive, liberal and radical vanguard, those who might have been expected to have the more inquiring and courageous minds, to have become the spokesmen for and formulators of the programs for our time of transition.

Nor is the skepticism that arises from this failure the experimental skepticism of science which enriches thought and leads to more informed action. It is a species of demoralization that could not have come from mere error and defeat or blows dealt by opponents. It arises from a sense of inner failure; a self-doubt which inhibits thought and paralyzes action; an ambiguity that drains the mind because it remains unresolved. It arises out of the fact that our first apparent triumph has become a source of enlargement of the evils we sought to avoid, that the chief hope of our age has turned into the chief source of moral infection. Until this ambiguity has been resolved, the energies will not be released again to enable us to resume our advance.

### III

The leader of the Bolshevik revolution, in the first flush of victory, warned his followers that "it was easier for the Russians to *start* the great proletarian revolution, but it will be more difficult for them to *continue* it and carry it to final victory, in the sense of organizing a complete socialist society." (Emphasis in the original.) During the few years of vigor that were left to him, Lenin returned to this thought again and again.

"It would be absurd," he told those who had gotten "swelled heads," "to represent our revolution as an ideal for all countries." It came about, he reminded them, as a result of a combination of peculiar and special circumstances; at best it made Russia "advanced" in one respect only. This advance was more aspiration than reality, while in all other respects Russia lagged behind the "modern, civilized" world, and would have to go to school to the more advanced capitalist countries. As soon as any more "civilized" country should enter on the socialist path, it would instantly outdistance Russia and leave it once more in all respects backward. Those other countries were politically, economically, culturally, far more suited to make the socialist experiment than Russia, an experiment which Russia, through peculiar circumstance had been enabled to "start" but was so ill-suited to "continue" or bring to "final victory."

Indeed, he again and again expressed doubt that Russia would be able to build a socialist society at all, unless it were aided by a revolution in a more industrialized country. He hoped most for a revolution in Germany because the latter bordered on Russia, because after the war it was politically in flux, because aid could best come from there. Germany's industry and technique and Russia's reserves of raw materials, land and manpower, he felt, would make an unbeatable combination.

Yet it was the United States that interested him most from the standpoint of general theory. Because of its freedom from feudal or absolutist heritage, because of its democratic traditions, its class fluidity, its wide distribution of landed property, its universal literacy and

widespread dissemination of the foundations for a popular culture, above all because of its concentrated industry, modern technique and magnificent productive capacity—it was the United States that seemed to him the land best fitted to carry through a socialist transformation. In time “Americanization” became the watchword of Russian industry, as prior to 1917 the American system of distribution of the land (through nationalization of the public lands and the Homestead Acts) had seemed to Lenin the model for an agrarian revolution. This longing for “Americanization” exhibits, as in a floodlight, the inadequacies of Russia for a socialist revolution. At the same time, it suggests fresh insights into the possibilities and prospects of our own country.

#### IV

For the entire quarter century of its existence, the Soviet Union has really been engaged not in socialist but in pre-socialist, that is, normally capitalist tasks. Under the aegis of the so-called proletarian dictatorship, Russia has been attempting what in other lands was accomplished by the bourgeoisie, namely: mechanization of industry and the accumulation of the necessary capital for such large-scale industrialization. As in the other lands, this accumulation of capital and mechanization of industry have been accompanied by the absorption or ruin of petty handicraft industry, the ruthless exploitation of the peasantry and proletariat, the severest curtailment of mass consumption and mass well-being in the interests of the accumulation of capital goods.

To be sure, the exploitation of the working class was mitigated at the outset by the fact that the government professed to act in its name, and that the masses had had their initiative and hopes of well-being and freedom aroused by their participation in two successful revolutions. It is this initial mass awakening which explains the slow and tortuous nature of the process whereby the unions and soviets were drained of their powers and content, the rival working class parties outlawed, and finally the communist party itself weakened by continuous blood-letting until rigor mortis set in. On the other hand, exploitation was the more ruthless because of the impoverishment and ruin from which the new Russia started, because of the rapidity of the tempo aimed at, because of the paralyzing belief that every action of the State expressed the interests of the governed, and because of the persistence in Russian life of so many of the traditions and habits of absolutism.

Lenin was by no means unaware of the fact that the Russian Revolution was faced with these limited and hard pre-socialist tasks. It would never have occurred to him, as it has to his successor, to palm off this miserable, underfed, underclad, underhoused and under-instructed land as one that had "attained socialism." He had taken power because at a given moment he had seen the possibility of snatching it out of the chaos of war and the collapse of tsarism, because he believed that it was the only way the war could be brought to an end, and because he felt that the Russian bourgeoisie was—as it doubtless was—too weak and cowardly to carry out

its own political and economic tasks. The Russian Revolution he modestly termed a "bourgeois democratic" revolution; but since it was taking place in a world whose more advanced countries were ripe for socialism, he was firmly convinced that the Russian Revolution would serve to start a world upheaval. Then the advanced countries could in turn help to solve the monstrous problems of raising this backward, barbarous, impoverished land to the level of contemporary civilization.

As the prospect of world revolution faded, he narrowed his hopes to the holding on of power until a new wave of revolution might come in the West. Meanwhile, they might at least attempt under a government more favorable and responsive to the masses—rather than a bourgeois or feudal-bourgeois regime—the elementary task of modernizing Russia and laying the foundations for a socialist society which he placed at least several generations, a half century or more, distant.

The rural tasks he outlined were no less modest: the abolition of feudalism, the breakup of the great estates, the parceling out of the land to the actual tillers (an "American revolution" on the land), and the modernization of technique and spread of literacy so that some day when the cities had much to offer the peasants in exchange goods and implements, the latter might be convinced by enlightenment and example that cooperative production could be superior to individual. Though he sanctioned the use of force during the first hard years for the purposes of collecting grain for the cities, he sharply opposed the suggestion that the peasants should

be herded into "collective farms" by police methods, as was done during the decade after his death.

On the cultural field he made mock of the grandiose plans of the *proletcult* enthusiasts. Our task, he told them, is to teach the masses to read and write, to use soap and a tooth brush, to exterminate roaches, bedbugs and lice, to curb epidemics and famines, to learn the elementary lessons that have become second nature in the West. We must learn how to keep books, calculate costs, organize trade and distribution. We must apprentice ourselves to capitalism in every field, and not get swelled heads. We must try to electrify the country, get electric bulbs and the products of the machine into every peasant hut; and, because we represent the interests of the masses, we can modernize our land with less cost to them than would otherwise be the case. The material basis for all his hopes lay in machinery and modern industry, in the electrification and mechanization and industrialization of the Russian land.

## V

In the United States the machine is not some music of the future. Our mechanization was accomplished under the stimulus of the world's largest continuous internal market. The machine is a commonplace which our life now takes for granted. It even enters universally into private existence in the form of the "gadget" and the five-and-ten factory-made product. (Woolworth's would look to the average Russian like the realization of his dream of a communist heaven!)

In Russia, the machine has been—still is—a dream

and a fetish, something to strain for, deny one's self for and suffer to attain. Russia has literally fed into two entire over-lapping generations of men and women, peasants and workers, to the hunger of the machine. Spurred by the ruthlessness of its rulers and the patient sufferance and fitful and feverish enthusiasm of its masses, aided by the late start which has made it possible to borrow its technique instead of slowly inventing it, the Soviet Union has accomplished in less than two decades much of what it took the industrial revolution in the West a number of generations to accomplish.

But human material and cultural level develop more slowly than the machine, while the skeleton foundation for the constantly postponed socialist society sags under the inherited structural defects and the newly developed ones. Handicraft producers have been ruined faster and more ruthlessly than England's handweavers, whose sufferings Marx so eloquently described in *Capital*. And more needlessly, since they were not competed out of existence but policed out of existence while the new machines were still incapable of providing an adequate supply of consumers' goods. The "plans" have failed to provide for machine tending and mending, for replacements and repairs. The whole capital plant, having been installed all at one time tends to wear out all at one time. There are constant breakdowns, mass resistance, stubborn, mute and unorganized.

Initiative is destroyed by the hierarchical leader principle;—the inorganic monolith is held up as the model for human institutions. Without discussion there can be no planning and without opposition there can be

no discussion. But opposition is physically and morally annihilated. Even errors and miscalculations and simple hesitations are punished with a cruelty and bloodiness unknown in the whole history of penal legislation. The death penalty for spoilage, for petty theft, for poor quality, for incompetence, for "hooliganism," is incredibly common. Thus everything is subordinated to the hard fetishes of efficiency and production, and some of Lenin's harshest words are applied in overflowing measure: "While the revolution in the West is slow in 'appearing,' our task is to study the state capitalism of the Germans, to spare no effort in copying it and not to shrink from adopting dictatorial methods to hasten the copying of it. Our task is to do this even more thoroughly than Peter did in hastening the copying of Western culture by barbarian Russia; and he did not hesitate to use barbarous methods in fighting against barbarism." (It was this generally marginal aspect of Lenin's views, without the compensating insight, honesty of avowal and humaneness, which was enlarged and made central in "Stalinism.")

It is important to recall in this connection that the core of Marx's indictment of capitalism lay in his brilliant theory of "fetishism." It seemed to him that modern man was bowing down to the things he had himself created, much as the African tribesman did to the fetish his own hands had carved out of wood. There was even a species of human sacrifice in this subordination of man to his machines, of man as producer of his own livelihood to accumulation and profit.

But because Russia has really been engaged in the



pre-socialist tasks of accumulation of capital and mechanization, the fetishistic worship of machine production and accumulation have actually reached a level hitherto unknown in history. Production for use, for human well-being and happiness, is still relegated to some millennial future. Despite a quarter century of suffering and of undoubted material achievement, Russia is even now one of the least fitted of the great countries to begin the organization of a socialist society. Conversely, from the standpoint of ending the fetishism of machinery and profit, the United States is the land best fitted by its capacity for the production of abundance.

## VI

Properly speaking, socialism does not become feasible at all until after the foundations have been laid for an economy of abundance. Then it becomes more than feasible; it becomes necessary, if this potential capacity for abundance is to be realized. For capitalism is based upon an economy of profit-through-scarcity which sets definite social limits upon the achievement of abundance. Thus a second basic prerequisite for the introduction of socialism is a certain minimal level of capitalist development.

"A higher development of the productive forces," Karl Marx wrote at the very outset of his career, "is the absolute and necessary practical premise because, without it, want is generalized; and with want, the struggle for necessities begins again, and that means that the old crap must revive."

One need only recall the brutalizing animal scramble

for "living space" (a chance at a bed or a corner of a room), for an extra herring and ration of bread, for a pair of serviceable shoes, a bottle of milk for one's baby, to realize how in Russia "want has been generalized and the struggle for necessities has begun again." And one need only recall the premiums and penalties, the spread between the higher and the lower income brackets, the bureaucratic privileges, the fawning and adulation, the fear and terror, the intrigue and frantic competition by which the few in Russia get the dwellings, food, clothing of which there is not enough to go around, to realize how pathetically exact these words are as a description of what has been passed off as socialism in Russia. It would be hard to find a great land less fitted than Russia is even now to become the laboratory for a "socialist experiment" in the achievement of an economy of abundance and mass well-being.

On the other hand, where would we find a land better fitted for that undertaking than our own? For the past decade we have been conducting the greatest experiment in history in the artificial maintenance of scarcity. We have been holding back in terror the flood of abundance which—given capitalist conditions—threatens to drown us. We have been employing heroic methods—loans, premiums, purchases, punitive fines and threats—to plow under a portion of our crops, to withdraw land from cultivation, to warehouse the products and distribute some part of them by mysterious devices outside the normal channels of the profit system. We have taken over millions in mortgages and bank stocks, our government has engaged in banking functions on an

unprecedented scale, we have sustained bankrupt companies and whole industries, sterilized a large portion of our productive capacity, invented boon-doggling and make-work and simple dole devices to keep separated from each other idle men, idle machines, idle capital, and "idle" human needs.

## VII

Despite all the bandying of the word "plan" Russia has not so far had a planned economy. Planning requires first a steady objective and Russia has been obliged to change in the middle of her first five-year period from planning for industrialization to planning for war. Her second objective which it was promised would begin with the second "Five Year Plan" and thereafter become dominant—consumers' goods and mass well-being—was abandoned altogether. Nor was Russia exempt from the fantastic fluctuations in the world market since she had to import her machinery from abroad and pay for it with agricultural products and raw materials the exchange value of which had been driven by the great depression down towards the vanishing point.

More important still, planning for any objective requires careful scientific consideration; free discussion; objective weighing of factors, possibilities, needs, desires; experimental adoption of figures which are changed and amended with each phase of experience and with each alteration in the material and psychological factors motivating the plan. But even Russia's "First Five-Year Plan" was adopted after a furious

denunciation of all who urged a careful balance between various branches of industry or between producers' and consumers' goods, and of all who proposed tentative schedules differing from those endorsed by the "genial leader." From start to finish the whole "discussion" was carried on in an atmosphere of apotheosis, heresy hunt and purge. The planfulness diminished steadily as the purge statistics mounted, until the most loyal executors of the plan were purged for having carried it out (the "dizzy with success" purge), and then the economists who had drafted the schedules and worked out the very figures which were officially adopted, were in turn purged as having been traitors and saboteurs from the start. Followed the purge of the bloodhounds who had executed the "planners" (the "purging of the purgers")—and the end is not yet.

Moreover, the figures were never taken seriously even for a moment. They were treated as a slogan rather than as the figures of a plan. Every individual and factory was encouraged and terrorized into ignoring the figures and trying to outdistance them, regardless of the effect upon the rest, so that there could not possibly be a tentative balance or a series of planned revisions. By the time the "Third Five-Year Plan" was due, the purge of the entire planning commission and the heads of all bureaus, departments, commissions, and "autonomous republics" was so complete and the confusion so general that for two and one half years the country had a "planned" economy without so much as a paper plan or a planning commission. Nothing was left of the plan except the fetishism of accumulation

of machines and the slogans and premiums and penalties for speedup of uncoordinated effort. The "Report" that was finally substituted for the Third Five-Year Plan was so cock-eyed that the very control figures contradicted each other, and once the congress that "accepted" it unanimously without discussion had adjourned, no further attention was paid to it.

A few years ago, when talk of planning for peace instead of war was in the air, George Soule laid down some simple axioms concerning planning, which, as near as I can remember them, may be summed up as follows:

1. "The major purpose may be good or bad; it may be efficiency in war or abundance in peace. The government served by planning may be a pure democracy or an absolute dictatorship, or anything in between. A New England town meeting can be advised by a planning commission."

2. Planning should be advisory. It should not decide objectives but accept objectives as democratically determined by representative democratic bodies, base its calculations upon these and make recommendations for their realization and answer questions put to it concerning possibilities.

3. Plans should always have indefinite margins to allow for uncontrollables, physical, physiological or psychological, such as weather, epidemics, bumper crops, changes in taste and fashion, new inventions and the like.

4. The plans must be in continual state of checking, revision, reexamination and can and should be more flexible than the planless and uncontrolled factors in an unplanned or less consciously planned society.

5. The millions who execute the plan and the millions who are served by it should exercise an initial and continuous and retroactive control based on information, subsequent experiences with the plan, and any possible changes in their needs or desires.

Moreover, in the question of planning, too, we are dealing with a phenomenon in which we can no longer choose in the gross sense because an increasing degree of planning is inherent in industrial civilization and the real choice is that of objectives and methods. Just as planning can abolish all freedom by increasing the scope of a dictatorial bureaucracy or a personal dictator so that such bureaucracy or bureaucratic leader can determine everything for everybody, so it can serve to raise democracy to hitherto unknown heights by permitting a democratic control from below of every aspect of economic life.

These alternative possibilities inherent in planning give new importance to the traditional emphasis of the socialist movement on the central position of "the producers" or "workers of hand and brain" in the inauguration of a democratic socialist society. It is not because the Socialist movement idealizes the working class or the trade unions that it has made this emphasis, but because it has felt that the producers, in the broad sense of that term, are less tied than those who own for a living to the old economic order, and more interested by the conditions of their existence in seeing to it that the scarcity-economy gives way to the already feasible economy of abundance. Moreover, it is the consultation of their associations (unions, cooperatives, and, we might

add, associations of consumers as such) which would lay the basis for the new institutions of a new economic democracy.

In this connection there has been much written about the so-called "new middle class" and the role of technicians (technocrats), politicians (bureaucrats) and "managers" in a planned collectivist society. Just as traditional, pre-Stalinist socialism always assumed an extension of democracy to the economic field and not a destruction of its political features ("socialized ownership and democratic control" is the traditional formulation), so it has always assumed in the term producers or toilers or working class the inclusion of "workers of hand and brain," all those whose primary mode of getting a living was intellectual or physical work rather than ownership. Technicians, statisticians and accountants, managers, foremen, straw bosses, skilled workers, unskilled workers, helpers—the gradations in actual industry are continuous, and all, by their primary role in the productive process are potentially interested in its expansion into an economy of abundance.

It is not within the scope of this essay to consider the very real problems involved in this field: how trade union organization can be democratized, since trade unions that are not democratically but dictatorially run can hardly be made into instruments for democratic planning and social production; how the special interests of skilled workers, sometimes tied by their position to an economy of scarcity, can be reconciled with the interests of the mass of the workers; how the labor movement in the narrower sense can be expanded to

include or have friendly alliance with technicians, without permitting the latter to run the show on the one hand, nor humiliating and terrorizing them on the other (both dangers have appeared simultaneously in Russia!). These are difficult problems but not inherently insoluble ones. For the purposes of this discussion it is sufficient to indicate that just as this special layer of brain workers can be (as many have been in the past) subordinated to those who set profit above production and use; so they can become experts at the service of society, or, alternatively, themselves a new dominating bureaucratic privileged caste.

## VIII

In Russia the decisive forces which made for the development of such a privileged and domineering bureaucracy were three: (1) the effect of perpetual war and state of siege psychology; (2) the heritage of bureaucratic methods and mass ignorance carried over from the old regime; (3) the lack of material resources for the distribution of material and cultural abundance on a reasonably equalitarian and democratic scale.

As to the first, it suffices to note that the Russian Revolution issued out of the universal ruin and brutalization of the First World War; it continued into civil war and intervention which thwarted and blotted out most of the better objectives in Lenin's program and reinforced and raised to a system the less desirable aspects; it was followed by a prolonged rule under the psychology of state of siege and encirclement, and then issued into a second world war. Even a more powerful



economy with a better heritage of culture would have had difficulty following the better rather than the worse path to "some sort of collectivism" under such circumstances.

It is not my purpose to enter into controversy here with those who scoff at the inevitability of some sort of collectivism, but find inevitable America's entrance into the present war. I have argued elsewhere that this is a field in which choice is still open to America, that we can, if we choose, stay out of this war, give more aid to the European peoples to shake off the tyranny that oppresses them, and, if we unleash even partially our amazing capacity for abundance, easily meet German, or Pan-European, or any other competition in South America or elsewhere in the world. Here I must limit myself to noting that the chances of the worse variants of collectivism, the bureaucratic and totalitarian outcome, will be greatly enlarged if the die is finally cast for war.

The second force that made for totalitarian bureaucratism in Russia, stems from the overwhelming heritage of Russia's past. With the possible exception of Mandarin China, old Russia was the most bureaucratized country in the world over the longest period of history. Even in the sixteenth century—and earlier—it had already developed a ubiquitous, superclass, professional bureaucracy and a species of political police (the *oprichnina*). It was the extension of the sole personality and will in that vast land, the omnipotent and theoretically omniscient and omnificent autocrat. It regulated in minute detail every aspect of labor, conduct and

thought. Administration was by *ukaz* or decree and not by law. Omnipresent spying, informing, provocation and terror were a permanent necessity since there was no mechanism of determination, or initiative, or assent, emanating from below. "Discussion" was limited to the explaining of the Tsar's will. *Kryepost* and *nevolya*, fixity and absence of will, were the universal characteristics of Russian life. Fixity meant internal passports, obligatory attachment to status, to one's communal village, to one's employment; *nevolya* meant absence of individual determination and absence of freedom.

Centuries before socialism was so much as thought of, the Russian state not only policed and regulated but actually owned outright more factories and branches of industry and trade, more land and serfs, and employed more labor than any private owner in Russia or any state or private owner anywhere in the world. The greatest industrializer before Stalin, Peter the First, created whole industries by the simple expedient of decreeing their existence, ordering men of wealth to invest stipulated amounts, transferring from the treasury or levying from the people such funds as seemed necessary, ascribing so and so many thousands of serfs from the state farms to the state factories. He used ruthless force to stamp out opposition, inspire terror and insure the success of his "plan." In the end Russia was sufficiently transformed by Peter so that its new industries enabled him to stage a military comeback and win a series of great wars, but these "barbarous methods of fighting barbarism" left the land psychologically more

brutalized, less fit for initiative and self-government than before. What James Burnham would make into the embryo of a brand-new, still aborning "managerial revolution," what other commentators would explain as an imitation of Hitler, is—more than anything else—the Old Russia reasserting itself after Russia's human, psychological and material resources had proved inadequate to the development of a socialist society. In a period of covert but remorseless reaction, they tend to reinforce the features of the less desirable variant of collectivism. However, our own land, with its class fluidity, its "frequent and easy changes of condition between the governors and the governed" (the words are Jeremy Bentham's), its lack of hierarchy and status, of absolute authority or feudal or courtier tradition, its tradition of discussing and talking back, its network of voluntary associations, its training in the employment of democratic institutions, need not fear that it will be readily "Russianized."

But the third force, the lack of material resources, is on the whole the most decisive in determining the re-appearance of bureaucratic domination once a people has attempted to get rid of it. Thanks to the literal scarcity of goods and productive capacity, there was no possibility in Russia for the generalization of physical and cultural plenty. The only equality possible was the "generalization of want." It was not hard to take away from the rich; it was impossible to give to the poor. As in the middle ages or in the ancient communal tribe, wealth could be "socialized" only by its being denied to all and being possessed symbolically by all in

the form of public monuments or buildings and the attributes of those engaged in the public service.

Let us take as an example so symbolic an object as an automobile. In the Russia of 1917 it was still a rarity and an object of luxury. The few cars belonging to the very wealthy and to the upper layers of the Tsarist bureaucracy might be expropriated and stored in public garages, but there was no way of giving them to the masses. Even an effort to give every man and woman in Russia one automobile ride in his lifetime would leave most of the population still waiting their turn after a quarter century "in power." Even in 1936, after two five-year plans with all their sacrifices and achievements and after the importation of many thousands of foreign cars, an attempt to move all the population of Russia in autos, trucks and tanks during the course of a single day, would mean that one man in Russia would be able to ride for every 150 who would have to walk! The corresponding figures for Germany would have been: one man rides for every ten who walk. And for the United States? Every man, woman and child would ride, and there would be plenty of room to spare.

Thus there was only one conceivable way to "socialize" the automobile, namely to take it over for the use of the State. In practice this meant—and still means—that only top bureaucrats can possess an automobile, while a few cars are kept for use in turn by lesser bureaucrats when they go on "important errands." Inevitably the car became a symbol of bureaucracy. One who rode in one was known to be a "big shot." And

what intrigue among them to determine who is important enough to rate a car and who should get the right to an occasional call on one! Inevitably, the car became a symbol of bureaucracy, an automatic means of widening the gulf which separated the bureaucracy from the masses, a special source of prerogative and privilege and symbol of power. Characteristically, the bureaucrats by and large have not learned to drive but are being driven around by (shabbily) liveried chauffeurs! And Lenin's original program had envisaged an administrative apparatus of men indistinguishable from those who delegated them, receiving the same wages, subject to instruction (dictation) and recall by their constituents, made increasingly superfluous as the state "withered away" and "every cook" became capable in turn of determining and even administering affairs of economy and state!

In the year 1939 there were more than 31,000,000 autos and trucks in the United States registered and riding the roads. This included some 400,000 cars owned by the national and local governments, and 30,615,087 cars privately owned. Redistributed, that made an average of one car for every family in the land. Our auto factories, however, have never run at capacity, because of the limitations set upon production by our scarcity-profit economy. Even in 1929—our best year—we produced only 5,621,715 cars out of a theoretical capacity as then estimated of between ten and twelve million cars. Since 1929, we have never once produced as many cars as during that year, although the capacity of our plants has continued to rise. If we could lift the

restrictions set upon our productive capacity by capitalist market relations, we could produce in a single year enough cars (without expropriating a single one) to give every carless family in America at least one automobile. And that without building a single additional plant. There, in a symbolical nutshell, is the difference between an economy of poverty and scarcity and an economy of abundance, between the generalization of want which widens the gulf between the state official and the common man and revives "the old crap" in a new form, and the generalization of plenty. At least the physical basis inheres in our present economy to generalize abundance in school houses and text books, in radios and concerts, in color prints and sporting goods, as in autos and shoes.

We will not inquire into the present use or abuse of such an instrument as the radio either here or in Germany or in Russia. But for good or ill, there are more radios in private homes in the United States, and more sets manufactured here each year, than in Germany, Great Britain, France, Japan, and Russia put together. In Germany there were enough private radios to make it seem desirable to the Nazi government to forbid tuning in on foreign stations. In Russia there are so few sets after three five-year plans and the "achievement of socialism" that the Government, with the outbreak of the Russo-German war, simply stopped the possibility of listening to any but its own broadcasts by picking up every private set and leaving only those in public places and public squares. In the United States for traditional and material reasons neither the German

method nor the Russian is so much as even conceivable.

From whichever branch of industry we consider, we get similar indications. With only a little over  $\frac{1}{20}$  of the world's population, we produce more than  $\frac{1}{2}$  of the world's total chemical output,  $\frac{3}{4}$  of the world's cars, possess 60% of the world's proved coal reserves, and 50% of the oil reserves, and so with cotton and bread and oranges and meat and printing and innumerable other things, even down to our over 200,000 tons of sodium bicarbonate per year, which casts an intriguing sidelight on the rationality of our use of all our capacity for abundance. Of telephones, which are still in Russia a bureaucratic prerogative, we have 20,000,000—six times that of Germany. If desired, we are equipped to put a telephone into every home in the land in a single year. Thanks to the volume of our capacity, our technical equipment and raw material reserves, and the productivity of our labor, we can if we will distribute more to our people and yet sell more cheaply than any other country in the world almost any common article of consumption. Except for the deliberate profit-scarcity limitations of Alcoa, there was no more reason why Germany should have been able to undersell us on aluminum utensils in Latin America than in cars, in which, with the best paid labor and free labor organization, we undersell the world. The morbid fear of German competition is inseparable from our fear to unleash our own amazing productive capacity in a socialist economy of abundance which would have nothing to fear either in productive capacity or in morale from a totalitarian collectivist slave-economy.

The same is as true of producers' goods as it is of consumers' goods. Steel—the skeletal material for all our enterprises—shows the same balance. Here Russia has strained herself to the utmost and has indeed made phenomenal progress, of which her people—if they can forget the human costs—may well be proud. Yet, by straining her capacity to the utmost, the Soviet Union in 1941 will be able to produce (ignoring the destructive effect of the war) some 16 million tons. The United States has been producing something like 40,000,000 tons in active years without ever coming near to the capacity of our plants. At present, by using that plant to capacity (without adding a single furnace), we can produce about 85,000,000. We are now debating the addition in a single year or so of a greater additional capacity than Russia's total after three ruthless five-year plans. For the uses of peace and plenty, we have always held that mighty capacity in ruinous check, and only for the purposes of war do we begin to let ourselves out and, without brutality and sense of strain, further increase our productive capacity.

No less fundamental from the standpoint of industry and from that of lightening drudge labor is our mighty power industry and still untapped power resources. That capacity may well prove inadequate now to spreading the "four freedoms" by force throughout the world, but we have never really taxed them to spread freedom from want and freedom from fear throughout our own abundance-choked land. Our capacity at this moment is around 35,000,000 kilowatts, or translated into hours on a twenty-four hour basis, something over 200 billion



kilowatt hours per year. The meaning of such power in bringing light into every home, banishing drudgery, spreading plenty, and putting these billions of mechanical slaves at the disposal of whatever man has the vision to desire, is beyond our comprehension.

Norman Thomas commented in his latest book ("We Have a Future") on how much more we have known all these years about our needs in housing, schools, clothes, hospitalization, than about our needs if we are to go into this war to sow the four freedoms (including "freedom from want") throughout Europe, Asia and Africa by the force of our arms. During the bitter years of the depression, through ignorance or inertia or tenacious conservatism we have continued to perpetuate our dangerous scarcities and discontents. Now a menacing and destructive end serves to plan and coordinate and unleash our amazing productive capacity to the utmost for the purposes of war. This shows us in monstrous distorted form, as it did the German people, that it is possible to use our productive capacity and even enlarge it further, feed and clothe all our people and employ them all, and at the same time burn up most of the national product in smoke. If the years of the depression and plowing under have made it painfully obvious in negative fashion that capitalism has become a fetter on our capacity to produce abundance, the war makes it no less painfully obvious in positive fashion.

Both depression and war, by the measures they occasion, tend to smoothe the way for the less desirable form of transition to that "some sort of collectivism" of which we have been talking. It has been the object of

this essay to dissipate in some measure the nightmare fear derived from the Russian Revolution that only its evil outcome is possible; to indicate that a democratic socialism is a feasible alternative to a military totalitarianism; and to suggest that America by its history and traditions and by its amazing capacity to produce and generalize physical and spiritual abundance, is as well fitted to lead along the more desirable path as Russia was unsuited to serve as a favorable laboratory for a "socialist experiment." It is the writer's contention that whatever the difficulties in the way—and they are many—there is less reason for defensive retreat and despair than is now being assumed. America is still equipped to make good the promise it once seemed to hold out to its own people, and to the world.

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## The Need Still Is: A New Social Order

*BY LEWIS COREY*

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**M**ARXISM as a progressive social force is dead. Revolutionary Marxism, in the shape of communism, turned into its totalitarian opposite in Russia; communists everywhere are now the enemies of democracy and freedom, their antics serve only to demoralize the progressive and labor forces and to strengthen fascist reaction. Reformist Marxism, in the shape of the dominant moderate socialism, was unable to make good its program and met disaster in the struggle against fascism; party socialists everywhere now mainly repeat a theoretical litany become mumbo-jumbo in a world that refuses to stay put in the pigeonholes of older theory and tactics.

The collapse of Marxist socialism is not, however, a tragedy of Marxism alone. It is a tragedy of democracy. For socialism arose out of democracy, and it aspired after the highest fulfillments of the democratic ideal (including a free society without a state). The collapse of socialism is, at least for the time being, a col-

lapse of the *future* of democracy. That conclusion is strengthened by the failure of non-socialist democracy to stop fascism; democracy is everywhere on the defensive against fascism and democratic governments are moving toward totalitarian forms.

The collapse of Marxism is also an intellectual tragedy. Despite all its shortcomings, Marxism represented a rational scientific effort to understand and shape history and society. Its failure gives obscurantists a chance to display their shopworn goods as new, and they make ample use of the chance. Obscurantists attack the economic theory of Marx; but they forget that his prediction of the transformation and decline of capitalism is now verified. Obscurantists refurbish philosophical idealism to prove the magic influence of The Idea on history; but they forget that the real world is still a product of the interplay of material forces and human consciousness, and that Marx's historical materialism has enriched the understanding of history. Obscurantists argue that the failure of Marxism is proof that its rational approach to society and man was wrong; but they forget that fascism erects its system on irrationalism, and that the collapse of socialism is not a result of being too rational but of not being rational enough in its understanding of class-economic forces and tactics.\*

Most tragic in the Marxist failure is the collapse of

\* While I reject the Marxist tactics, I believe that Marx made a great contribution to the social sciences. Much of that contribution, if stripped of its Hegelian hangovers and related to later research and study, is still of great value. But the absolute system that "Marxists" made out of Marx's ideas must be thrown away.

the rational, conscious struggle for a new social order. Marxism was the greatest effort in history to apply reason to social change. Its emphasis was on the capacity of man, of man's understanding, consciousness and will, to shape a more desirable order that would more fully respond to human needs. The effort and the emphasis have failed. The failure leaves an empty space which we must fill, and fill quickly: the time is short, and we must still fight for a new social order. For Marxism was right in one thing: capitalism is not eternal, all its dynamic forces move toward an economic transformation out of which a new order emerges.

### *1. Three Errors of Marxism*

Why did Marxism collapse? The final answer is still in the making, and it must include consideration of many angles. I want to discuss three errors of Marxism, because I think they are basic to the answer and because they are directly related to the shaping of a new social order, which was always the aim of Marxism.

1. Marxism was wrong in the conviction and dogma that socialism *must* come after capitalism as the *only* alternative to capitalism. The dogma arose out of the uncritical theory of progress which infused the climate of opinion in the nineteenth century. Democrats and liberals felt that democracy would always, irresistibly move onward to higher fulfillments; the same feeling animated socialism. The dogma of inevitability, whether democratic or socialist, was always wrong on historical grounds. Now it is proven wrong by the rise of the monopoly corporate state of inequality, injustice and

tyranny as an alternative to capitalism, democracy and socialism.

2. Marxism was wrong in its emphasis on the proletariat as the carrier of the new order of socialism. The emphasis had a measure of historical justification in Marx's day, for the proletariat was then the only class that might rally to socialism, and faith in an historical mission invigorated the proletariat's consciousness and will to action. But even in Marx's day the proletarian emphasis excluded the lower middle class and farmers. The emphasis is now more lopsided, for in the past hundred years a new class has arisen—the new middle class of salaried employes and professional people. Within the new middle class are the functional groups without whose technical-managerial and professional skills it is impossible for industry and society to carry on. Hence, if we are to speak of “a new ruling class” after the capitalists, it is more logical that the new middle class should rule, not the proletariat, for that class manipulates the functional controls and violence of society. Democratic socialism is doomed unless it becomes the expression and realization of the interests and action of all useful functional groups: workers, the middle classes, farmers.

3. Marxism was wrong in its conception of a socialist state. While Marxism foresaw a future society without the state, it never saw the danger of a socialist state that might become absolute as it got all economic power in its grasp through absolute collectivism. The democratic dictatorship of the bourgeois revolutions gave Marx the idea of the proletarian dictatorship, to which he as-

signed socialist tasks. But while the democratic dictatorships made way for greater democracy, the communist dictatorship moved toward a totalitarian order. Why? Because the democratic dictatorships strengthened economic freedom by separating economic from political power in the state through destruction or modification of the absolute monarchy, while the communist dictatorship destroyed economic freedom by re-combining all economic and political power in an absolute state. There is no freedom without economic freedom. If the state has all economic power and is the only employer, "collective" or "proletarian" or "socialist" property is meaningless since control is a bureaucratic monopoly and workers are deprived of freedom on the job.

These three errors of Marxism were shared, in varying measure, by all the political expressions of Marxist socialism.

Social-democracy—the dominant moderate socialism—was unable to get political power largely because it was unable to broaden socialism to include the middle classes and peasants, who were antagonized by the proletarian emphasis. Socialism was narrowed down to a political expression of the proletarian trade unions, and so it never became an overwhelming popular movement. Social-democracy was convinced of the inevitability of socialism. It gave up the struggle for socialism, in the belief that the sum total of piecemeal reforms meant a gradual realization of socialism—for socialism *must* come after capitalism! Fascism rudely smashed the illusion. While social-democracy did not accept the communist idea of proletarian dictatorship, it believed in

government ownership of most, if not all, productive property: which meant a disastrous re-combination of economic and political power in the state that would undermine, where it did not wreck, the economic foundations of democracy.

In Russia the proletariat, by a fluke of history, seized political power through the Bolshevik party. It got the peasantry's support, because of the war and the peasant's desire to expropriate the landlords. But re-distribution of the land was not specifically socialist, as it was the measure of a bourgeois democratic revolution. Later, the communists "collectivized" the land, because their theory excluded a free peasantry from socialism. All productive property was socialized; that is, it was made state property. Absolute collectivism converted the proletarian dictatorship into an absolute state. The workers were deprived of all freedom on the job, while their labor unions became state organs to control the workers. The new middle class and bureaucracy, which opposed the Bolshevik revolution and were almost exterminated, came back into power in an absolute state that made them supreme over workers and peasants. The ruling class in the Soviet Union is not the proletariat, it is, in a general sense, the new middle class and its bureaucratic elements.\*

\* But only in a general sense. While the technical-managerial and professional groups in the new middle class are privileged—as they are under capitalism and would be under democratic socialism—they are deprived of freedom, along with workers and peasants, by the bureaucratic-military elites who are masters of the Stalin state. Democracy in Russia calls for a combined struggle of workers, peasants and new middle class groups, including the lower bureaucracy.



The three errors of Marxism shape up into one major error: the recombination of economic and political power in the state, which is the basis of totalitarianism.

## II. *Class-Economic Elements of Capitalist Transformation*

Marxists were so intent on the evils of capitalism and its coming breakdown that they forgot its constructive aspects. They forgot that, since it brought the largest measure of democracy in history, capitalism has made the outstanding contribution to an understanding of the elements that allow democracy to live and grow.

I do not think there can be any dispute that the origin of democracy and freedom in the modern world was the capitalist separation of economic from political power. Its combination in feudalism and the absolute monarchy created an unopposed and unopposable centralization of authority. As economic power was separated from the political, the multiplication of independent economic groups, with their freedom of enterprise, broadened to include the freedom of political, cultural and labor activity. Independence of the state invigorated the democratic freedoms and rights. A transformation of capitalism that re-combines economic and political power in the state makes it impossible for the democratic freedoms and rights to live and to grow.

Our problem is to retain the old economic elements of democracy that still work and to reshape in new forms the old elements that work no longer. With that in mind, let me re-cast the analysis of the class-economic

elements of capitalist transformation. It may offer the approach and ideas for a transformation that may avert the totalitarian danger and move toward democratic socialism.

Transformation of capitalism began with the industrial revolution, which introduced the technological dynamics that still drive economic change onward. The technology of the industrial revolution led to large-scale industry, greater capital requirements and the corporation. Corporations grew constantly larger and formed monopoly combinations that now dominate economic activity. In the United States about 1,500 corporations (out of more than 450,000 active corporations) year in and year out get upward of sixty per cent of all corporate net profits. They constitute an economic oligarchy within democracy. That is true in all highly developed industrial capitalist nations.

I do not want to re-tell the familiar story of the concentration of economic power and monopoly. What I want to do is to emphasize the class-economic transformation wrought by monopoly capitalism. The transformation moves toward a new economic order. But the order may be democratic or totalitarian: neither is inevitable: the outcome depends on our understanding and action.

The old economic individualism of competitive capitalism is replaced with the economic collectivism of monopoly corporate industry. Economic activity is caught in a network of interdependent forms that call for organization and planning on a large scale. Ownership is separated from management in the bigger cor-

porations, whose owners are absentee stockholders deprived of all useful functional tasks. Enterprise, initiative and responsibility are no longer personal capitalist functions, they are the collective institutional functions of hired corporate employees. Economic freedom is constantly limited as monopoly limits the freedom of enterprise and competition. The old ideal of a democracy where most people owned independent property as a means of livelihood is gone, for the overwhelming majority of our people are now property-less dependents on a wage-or-salary job for a living. Monopoly corporations are, by and large, above competition, and competition and the market no longer fully regulate production and profit. Profit is no longer a spur to greater production, for monopoly may make more money from limitation of output. Monopoly corporations are great economic empires that challenge the state and often control the state. They limit, where they do not destroy, the economic elements of democracy. Monopoly moves toward a new combination of economic and political power.

As capitalism grew into monopoly the proletariat grew in numbers until it became a majority, while the old middle class of independent enterprisers shrank steadily in economic importance and as a proportion of all persons gainfully occupied. Marx predicted just that development, and he was right. But the Marxists—with rare exceptions—failed to observe that a new middle class was coming into being more significant than the old—the new middle class of salaried employees and professionals; or if they observed the new class they did

not fully grasp its relation to capitalist transformation and socialism.

Petty and insignificant in the earlier competitive capitalism, the new middle class grew rapidly with the growth of corporate large-scale industry. In the United States salaried employees and professionals rose from about 600,000 in 1870 to more than 10,000,000 in the 1930's. They are now three times as great as the number of independent businessmen; one out of every five persons gainfully employed is a member of the new middle class; its numbers have grown faster than the proletariat, until now there is one member of the new middle class for every three wage-workers.

The causes of the phenomenal growth of the new middle class are simple, and of crucial importance in the transformation of capitalism and the drive toward a new order. As industry became more complex and collective it called for employees of various types to perform the constantly greater number of technical, managerial and administrative functions that the earlier industrial competitive capitalist combined, by and large, in his own person. The professions multiplied as industry needed more and more specialized talents and the increasing economic surplus made it possible for people to spend more on professional and cultural services and for government to spend more on education. Neither the industry nor society of today can carry on without the talents and services of useful functional groups in the new middle class.

From the angle of capitalist transformation and a new order the most important groups in the new middle

class are the technical-managerial and professional employees in corporate large-scale industry and government. In the past seventy years they have grown more rapidly than any other occupational group, paralleling the emergence of new economic forms. The significance of technical-managerial and professional employees in industry is that they come to functional economic dominance as ownership is separated from management in large corporate industry; they now perform the tasks of organizing and directing production that in the earlier capitalism were performed by owner-capitalists. Owners are still of functional importance in smaller corporations and in small non-corporate business, where they own and manage. But economic activity is now dominated by corporations in which the absentee-stockholder owners own but do not manage while the managers manage but do not own.

The functional economic dominance of technical-managerial and professional employees in large-scale industry is a fundamental manifestation of the transformation of capitalism. For it is no longer capitalism if capitalist ownership is deprived of the functions of organization and direction and becomes simply a claim upon the fruits of industry. The economic collectivism in which technical-managerial and professional employees organize and direct industry is the basis of a new economic order, where production for welfare may replace production for profit.

Another manifestation of the transformation of capitalism is the labor union. Labor unionism is the expression of the workers' democratic struggle for rights

and power in industry against arbitrary capitalist authority. Unionism transforms capitalism as it increasingly limits capitalist rights and power: as it introduces democracy and a constitutional order in industry through collective bargaining and a right to the job and a democratic share in management. The labor unions are identified with the economic collectivism that moves beyond production for profit to production for welfare.

The third manifestation of the transformation of capitalism is the increasing economic power of government. Classical capitalism said "hands off" to the state. The capitalists wanted the right to do as they pleased in economic affairs within the relations of private ownership, free enterprise and competition and the market. That ideal was most fully realized in England and the United States, but only for a moment in historical time. The increasing complexity of industry forced governments to more and more intervention in economic activity, often at the call of the capitalist himself. Democracy and labor, the farmers and consumers made government use its powers for popular economic welfare. The trend was strengthened by the economic crisis in Europe after World War I and by the depression of the 1930's in the United States. Now the war everywhere transforms capitalism as it forces governments to assume still greater economic powers. Constantly greater numbers of technical-managerial and professional employes in government perform tasks of economic regulation, organization or direction that formerly were capitalist prerogatives.

In the larger historical sense all three forces of cap-

italist transformation are progressive, for they provide the elements out of which a new democratic economic order may be built. It is progressive for the technical-managerial and professional employees in industry to come to functional dominance, for that makes it possible to carry on production without the capitalist. It is progressive for the labor unions to bring democracy and a constitutional order to industry. It is progressive for government to regulate, unify and plan production. The three institutional forces of capitalist transformation make it possible to get economic planning and equilibrium, a release of economic forces for full production and welfare, the decentralization of monopoly economic power to promote democracy.

It is with the three institutional forces of capitalist transformation that we must work to build a new democratic order. Progressive social change depends upon whether management, labor unions and the state combine in a democratic balance. If they do, then we will move toward a new world of greater democracy, welfare and peace.

### III. *A Constitutional Economic Order*

But while capitalist transformation moves toward a new order, it does not decide whether that order shall be democratic or socialist. The institutional forces of transformation may combine in a monopoly corporate state.

The corporate state is monopoly capitalism with the capitalism thrown out and the monopoly erected into a governmental system that clamps down monopoly controls on all economic, political and cultural activity. It

arises out of the failure to shape capitalist transformation in a progressive direction, and the failure arises out of the inability of management and labor unionism, the proletariat and new middle class to work together for democratic social change. That gives fascist reaction its chance. Monopoly big business opposes all measures to make the economic system work and makes the crisis worse; its top-administrators and technical-managerial employees swing to fascism; monopoly corporations merge in the corporate state, which breaks finance-capital controls and makes totalitarian bureaucracy the master of industry.

Let me repeat: the basis of the monopoly corporate state is the re-combination of all economic and political power in the state. How is the re-combination brought about? *By the state's seizure of absolute control over management and labor unions*, in a bureaucratic centralization of power that is unopposable and unopposed. Management is used to carry on production without the capitalists to serve state power; labor unions are not abolished, they are converted into *unfree* organizations with a new type of "labor leader" to manage the workers for the state. Absolute control of management and labor unions makes it possible for the corporate state to impose monopoly controls on small business, the professions and farmers.\*

\* The Soviet state was a product of class-economic forces and pressures different from those of fascism. It became a corporate state through the re-combination of economic and political power by means of absolute socialization of productive property, the state control of management and labor unions (unions in Russia are unfree organs of the state), and monopoly controls on all social activity.



The progressive potential in the three institutional forces of capitalist transformation is destroyed if they combine into one power, for that means totalitarianism. But they need not combine in one totalitarian power; it is not inevitable that they should. They may combine in a democratic manner.

If the basis of the corporate state is re-combination of economic and political power through the state's seizure of absolute control over management and labor unions, then *the alternative to the corporate state is a new economic order in which management, labor unions and the state combine in a constitutional economic system of checks and balances that allows the largest measure of democratic self-government in industry.* What I propose is application to socialist economic organization of the system of checks and balances devised to prevent arbitrary state power. Only by means of such a system can the new economic order be democratic.

The first need of a new economic order is to limit socialization of industry to monopoly. It is unnecessary, and a totalitarian danger, to socialize all productive property. Socialization of monopoly corporations, which dominate economic activity, provides enough strategic power to plan and balance the whole economy and to release its forces for the production of abundance and welfare.

The second need of a new economic order is a form of socialization that avoids the old idea of government ownership with a centralization of bureaucratic power. As monopoly corporations are taken away from private ownership and the control of finance capital, they

should be transformed into public corporations largely independent of the state. They are the employers, not the state. The public corporations are given the largest possible measure of self-government; they are told that their aim is no longer to make the biggest profits and pay the biggest dividends but to produce the most goods at the lowest price, with profit limited to the capital requirements for replacement and expansion; ownership ceases being a function or a claim on the fruits of industry.

The third need of a new economic order is a system of constitutional division of rights and powers and of checks and balances in the public or "socialized" sector of the economy.

In this system there would be a constitutional assignment of rights and powers to management, labor unions and the state. Assignment of rights and powers would express the performance of functional tasks. The functional task of management is to carry on the technical job of organizing and directing industry: it would get all the rights and powers to perform that task, but no more. The functional tasks of labor unionism are to protect the interests of workers on the job (workers will remain workers in any conceivable new order of the immediate future), to share in the formulation of economic policy, to balance management and the state: unions would get the rights and powers to perform their tasks, but no more. The functional tasks of government are to set up the new economic arrangements and to unify and plan production, to investigate, regulate and adjust: the state would get the rights and powers to

perform its tasks, but no more. Such a constitutional assignments of rights and powers, which can be neither infringed nor abrogated, assures the democratic balance of functional self-government.

If the three forces of capitalist transformation combine in a new constitutional economic order, *the technical-managerial and professional employees in large-scale industry come to functional dominance within the relations of democracy, in a setup that promotes greater democracy and freedom.*

The constitutional economic order would provide, in addition to management, labor unions and the state, representation for regional interests and the interests of consumers. Outside the public economy independent ownership would prevail in agriculture and small business and freedom of occupation in the professions, with a growing use of coöperatives for enterprises too small for socialization and too big for individual ownership. Small independent property may exist alongside of public property. It is not small property but monopoly that expresses the economic relations which bring crisis and the restriction of production. What is done with monopoly is crucial. If economic monopoly becomes the bureaucratic governmental monopoly of the corporate state, all freedom of economic, political and cultural activity is destroyed. If democratic constitutional socialization brings economic freedom into the domain of monopoly, all freedom is invigorated.

It is wholly possible to plan economic activity for balance, abundance and welfare in a system of limited collectivism, in which public corporations are largely

self-governing and freedom of enterprise exists in agriculture, small business and the professions. Planning does not call for absolute all-inclusive controls over every phase of economic activity. It calls for a minimum of strategic controls over profits, prices and investment to create a balance between production and consumption. The strategic controls are secured by destruction of monopoly-profit relations in dominant large-scale enterprises and their conversion into public enterprises, whose adjustment of investment, prices and profits to balance production and consumption would bring balance throughout the economy. Planning, moreover, may itself be democratic and decentralized: planning within a public enterprise, planning within an industry, planning between one industry and another—they may all be on a decentralized self-governing basis with only the final strategic regulation and control given to the national planning authority. Independent small businessmen and farmers and the coöperatives may be brought within planning, where necessary, by their own self-governing organs. Competition and the market may still function within the new economic relations, to serve as a check-up on efficiency and to give consumers freedom of choice.

There is no danger of a re-combination of all economic and political power in the state in a system of limited democratic collectivism where small independent property and coöperatives exist alongside of a constitutional order in large-scale industry. It is a system of economic pluralism. It is the application to the problem of socialist economic organization of the American political

system of checks and balances. The system was devised to prevent absolute political power in the state; it is more useful still to prevent absolute political *and economic* power.

Economic pluralism, moreover, would prevent a centralization of bureaucratic power. Our interdependent economic system makes inescapable a whole series of complex organizations that spawn bureaucracy in the form of one layer after another of managers and supervisors, administrators and directors. You find bureaucracy in corporate industry, in labor unions, in government. The problem is to prevent the different bureaucratic elements from combining into *one* bureaucracy, for that means absolute bureaucratic power. If the bureaucratic elements are kept separate from one another to perform their functional jobs, they may serve democracy and freedom. Ordinary citizens, the ordinary man and woman, find individual freedom and action impossible if they are opposed to a centralization of bureaucratic power.

Marxists, I now believe, have never fully understood the significance of power as a source of exploitation, oppression and corruption. Political power may bring more woe than economic power. A Stalin and a Hitler are responsible for infinitely more oppression, degradation and misery than a Krupp or a J. P. Morgan. Power corrupts; the nearer power comes to being absolute the more it corrupts the users of power. People who speak in the abstract of "a strong state" are dangerous; for, whether we want it or not, the state everywhere becomes stronger. Our problem is to decide what

powers the state may or may not get, to work out the institutional arrangements whereby the power needed to make social changes does not devour the progressive ends we want.

One final point: In the new social order there should be a synthesis of liberalism and democracy. The two have points of contact, but liberalism and democracy have been different class-historical forces. There was always an antagonism between them that must be reconciled.

Liberalism was an expression of the big bourgeoisie. It called for a state that governed least to allow the utmost freedom of action outside the state. A sound idea, for there is no freedom if the state is supreme. But while the liberal state governed least, the economic oligarchy within democracy created by the big bourgeoisie governed most over the lives of people dependent on their economic power. "Leave us alone," said the economic masters of society to the state and the people, but they left neither the people nor the state alone. Economic inequality made liberalism lopsided. The great liberal achievement was the idea of inalienable rights; but too often they became the inalienable right to starve.

Democracy was an expression of the small bourgeoisie, the peasants and workers. It called for the use of state power to check economic power and to promote the popular welfare. A sound idea, for only the use of state power could redress the economic balance in favor of the small man. But democracy may overdo the majority idea and trample on inalienable rights; use of the state to make social changes and promote popular

welfare may give the state too much power and end, as under communism and fascism, in the people becoming serfs of the absolute state.

We need a new synthesis of liberalism and democracy. We need democracy and the use of state power to create a social order of economic balance and justice. But we need, too, the liberal recognition of the danger in state power and of checks and balances on that power: the liberal recognition of inalienable individual rights that no majority or state, democratic or otherwise, may infringe or abrogate. Liberalism may become part of democracy in the new order with the destruction of monopoly economic power and inequality. It *must* become a part of democracy, for economic changes are justified only if they promote the freedom, personality and integrity of man.

#### IV. *The New Middle Class and Socialism*

A democratic alternative to the corporate state is altogether possible. It depends on our understanding and action. The corporate state arises out of a *particular* kind of capitalist transformation and out of *particular* relations under which technical-managerial and professional employees come to functional economic dominance. We can shape the transformation and the relations to serve democracy and freedom.

I want to emphasize this crucial point: *The functional economic dominance of technical-managerial and professional groups is not the basis of the corporate state, whose basis is the re-combination of economic and political power.*

The functions that management performs in large-scale industry are technical functions of organization and direction. Management now performs those functions in large monopoly corporations, where ownership is separated from management. It performs the same functions in the communist and fascist corporate state. It would perform the same functions under democratic socialism. But if that is so, then it is wrong to conclude that technical-managerial dominance *must* drive toward a totalitarian state. For that dominance, in itself, is compatible with either totalitarianism or democracy.

Moreover, technical-managerial and professional groups are not truly in power in the corporate state. They occupy a privileged position. But a similar privileged position is theirs under monopoly capitalism and would be theirs in any conceivable new democratic order of the immediate future. Technical-managerial and professional employees in a totalitarian system are under absolute control of top-administrators in industry and the state; they are under the absolute bureaucratic control of Caesarian adventurers and "elites" who are interested in production for power, not production for welfare; they are not much freer than workers and peasants, and must obey and be silent. The functional services performed by technical-managerial and professional employees are frustrated and distorted by bureaucratic tyranny and dry-rot, neither functional nor personal freedom and integrity are theirs. Destructive irrational totalitarianism is the opposite of the constructive rational attitudes of the performers of technical-managerial and professional services.



Let me state my argument in positive terms: *the functional economic dominance of technical-managerial and professional groups in industry and government is a progressive force that may promote greater democracy, welfare and freedom.*

For that functional dominance means that industry is no longer bound by capitalist-profit relations. It means that production for welfare may replace production for profit. The dominance of technical-managerial and professional employees, who are interested in the functional job of production, may free the economic forces to produce abundance. This progressive potential arises out of technical-managerial and professional functional attitudes: consideration of profit as a source of new production; efficiency and the abhorrence of waste; the rational scientific approach. They are all attitudes that can flourish only within the relations of democracy and freedom.

It is tactically suicidal, as well as wrong economically, historically and theoretically, to assume that technical-managerial and professional groups *must* come to functional dominance under totalitarian conditions. For it drives them away from progressivism and socialism. As they are driven away they strengthen reaction and fascism, their progressive potential is destroyed. A new democratic order—call it socialism—is impossible without the coöperation of the technical-managerial and other useful functional groups in the new middle class.

Socialism, because of its emphasis on the proletariat, never made a direct approach and appeal to the new middle class. The phrase “workers of hand and brain”

was largely meaningless, since it is neither functional nor concrete. The new middle class must be approached in terms of its functional interests and needs, not of proletarian interests and needs. Both classes must be shown where their interests coincide and are served in a new social order. The new middle class must be given a direct stake in socialism, not invited to come in through the back door or the cellar. Management and labor share an identity of interest in relation to monopoly and the struggle for a new social order that will avert the totalitarian state that enslaves management and unions. Hence union-management coöperation—for greater productive efficiency, against monopoly and a too powerful state—is a progressive force. So it is with the other useful functional groups in the new middle class: architects, teachers, medical workers, all of them: their functional interests and needs are served by a new democratic order that permits greater freedom and scope in the performance of functional services.

Socialism may again become a force only if it is the expression and realization of the interests and action of all useful functional groups: workers, middle classes, farmers. Can it be done? Yes, if socialism becomes a people's movement against monopoly capitalism, whose destruction will promote the interests of workers and technical-managerial employees, of small businessmen and farmers. Yes, if the new middle class is made to understand that within its grasp are the functional talents and skills with which to build a new free world.

It may be asked if the new order I outline is socialism. I ask in turn: what is socialism and for whom? A so-

cialism that is for the proletariat alone is unreal. Nor is socialism the millennial aspiration after an absolute economic equality. Income differentials based on differences in performance of functional services are not exploitation and they are not incompatible with socialism. Socialism—as distinct from the millennial “higher stage of communism”—never meant more than the abolition of capitalist privilege and power, the planning of production for economic balance and plenty, and greater democracy and freedom. The economic pluralism I propose is socialism, because it promotes greater democracy and freedom where absolute collectivism destroys them.

The workers? The workers remain workers in any conceivable new order of the immediate future. Workers are still workers in Stalin’s communist millennium. It is a fraud to promise to make workers “the new ruling class,” for it means that the rulers are bureaucratic despots who practice tyranny over the workers in their name. What the workers need is democracy and freedom. They need economic opportunity and security, an abundance of the material things of life, the leisure to cultivate personality. They need a system of universal higher education that will break the monopoly of technical-professional talents and skills and make individual human worth the measure of man. In the realization of those conditions is the emancipation of the proletariat.

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## Towards a Tolerable Society

BY JOHN CHAMBERLAIN

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BOOKS and essays on “——, or the Future of ——” invariably tell us more about the present than they do of the future. The standard trick of authors who would pretend to peer ahead is to extrapolate freely from existing trends, as when H. G. Wells boarded his famous time-machine with a mental baggage consisting of an overdrawn picture of the gulf between the upper and lower classes of late nineteenth-century Britain. Writing in the Eighties, Edward Bellamy managed to tell us far more about the Populist fears of those who looked to see all the little Trusts merged into One Big Trust than he did about any possible future of 2000 A.D. Almost invariably the prophetic writer makes the mistake that is celebrated in the sociologist’s fable of the scientific expedition which set out to inform itself of the forage resources between an American town and the North Pole. Having journeyed 500 miles due north, the expedition extrapolated from its experiences and returned with a report that future travellers might ex-

pect to find four hot-dog stands per mile *all the way to the Pole*.

In writing of the future, I propose to keep the fable of the hot-dog stands in mind every step of the way. But first, let the extrapolators have their say. Physically speaking, their vision is one of an aseptic, scrubbed-up age of fourteen-lane coast-to-coast highways, of autogyros travelling from Adirondack estates to glassy skyscraper tops, of food grown in trays without benefit of soil, and of parti-colored clothing bought, used and cast away as if it were Lily cups or Kleenex paper. Politically, the central controls of a socialistic World Federation are usually posited, with warfare outlawed once and for all. Marx and Robert Owen, Woodrow Wilson and Clarence Streit, are somehow cooked into a grand new dish that is guaranteed to please all comers. The population curves are projected in the light of present-day statistics for France, Britain and the U. S. (as if these three nations were the world), with fewer children per family and longer average life expectancy for us all. According to the presumed vital statistics of the future, a population plateau will be reached in the Sixties or the Eighties, with ponderable effects on the interest rate, the tax rate, and the institution of private ownership of the means and materials of production. With the population trends under perfect control, there will be planned cities with scientific feeder lane approaches; planned river-control systems, with the needs of irrigation and soil conservation and commerce all carefully considered; scientific farming and foresting, and, finally, a planned decentralization of industry into

beautiful green-belt communities that will be spread, in General "Happy" Arnold's phrase, "from hell to breakfast" because of the power and reach of the super-bombing plane. (This latter prophecy assumes there will be one or two interim wars between the present Armageddon, the second "war to end all wars" of the twentieth century, and the creation of the World Federation.) The health of the World Federation inhabitants will be as perfect as preventive medicine and the vitamins from A to the still undiscovered Z will permit.

But, of course, nothing will happen quite as the extrapolators suppose. Nothing ever does, as the scientists in Cleveland discovered when they raised mice in an absolutely germless environment only to see them become weaker and less adaptable than mice which have to brave the terrors of disease and the Tom cat. There will be better city planning, yes; the roads will improve as Connecticut's Merritt Parkway has improved over the old Boston Post Road; and the doctors will continue to learn new tricks of battling disease. But uneven rates of development (and of retrogression) over the earth's surface will cause plenty of clutter and squabbling; and the shiftless tropics are always there to disturb our more Utopian dreams about equalitarian living on a planetary scale. For myself, I doubt the emergence of a World Federation, socialistic or otherwise, for reasons which I will set down later. I also doubt the long-term utility of projected population statistics. Who knows what birth and emigration policy the British Commonwealth of Nations will follow after the war?

The Finns are already talking of the duty of each Finnish family to have seven or eight children; and the French may be following suit in 1944. Back in the disillusioned Twenties well-to-do people of my acquaintance were saying they "would never bring a child into this horrible world," but as the world gets progressively more "horrible" these same people grow more earnestly philoprogenitive. If country living for the well-to-do comes back into fashion along with green-belt communities for poorer families, the large family may no longer be a characteristic of the slums.

In the late Twenties and early Thirties the extrapolators were busy chasing the curves of the prophetic "*Das Kapital*" clear off the edge of the graph. If extended (with the rich getting richer and the poor poorer, and with Big Ownership eating up Little Ownership) the curves were destined to go suddenly haywire and collapse all of a heap into the proletarian revolution and the Classless Society. But Soviet Russia, with its new favored class of bureaucratic managers, caused the extrapolators so much anguish that open heresy developed among those who knew a hawk from a handsaw. The heresy has resulted in extrapolation of a different sort, the chief recent example of which is James Burnham's vision of the future as outlined in "The Managerial Revolution." Burnham's theorizing differs from that of "Fascist" Lawrence Dennis's in that he considers the New Deal, the Churchill government, the Stalin bureaucracy and Hitler's Nazism all variants of the same thing. Since Burnham sums up and makes explicit much that is inchoate in the thinking of those New

Dealers who favor a top-down Planned Society, it will be well to tackle him here.

Briefly, Mr. Burnham thinks a new élite is coming into existence in the three great power-centers of Europe, North America and East Asia. This élite may be found within the ranks of private industry or in the great government bureaus such as the U. S. Department of Agriculture or OPM: what distinguishes it is that its members have an intimate working knowledge of the partly physical, partly psychological processes of organizing complicated factory and farm production in the age of high-tension power transmission, advanced chemistry and alloying, and scientific stock and plant breeding. Mr. Burnham sees this favored class as ousting absentee stock and bond holders from even partial control of the industrial machine; and, since the great economic decisions affecting mass employment and the distribution of goods and services are the important decisions of contemporary society, Mr. Burnham sees Congress falling by the wayside, too. The Senate and the House of Representatives are based on geographical representation, but geographical differences are no longer important as Mr. Burnham watches Chevrolets from Michigan carry airplane factory workers to and from their jobs in southern California. Mr. Burnham's "managers" must think in terms of continental production and distribution; hence they can't be bothered with the aberrations of a Senator D. Worth Clark from Borah's hang-back Idaho, or with the local-appeal demagoguery of a Marcantonio from New York's Harlem. The "managers" must have the power to formulate the



ends and dictate the means if they are to serve the community indirectly by satisfying their own sense of power.

Now, Mr. Burnham may be right or he may be wrong; but his world is not necessarily fated or pre-ordained to come into being in America. My assumption is that the future rests with those who have the will to make it; and as I look about me I see some people willing one thing, and some another, with the balance very much in doubt. There are many dangers, of course; for just as Oliver Cromwell fought for the toleration of "tender consciences" and ended up as dictator—or "Lord Protector"—of England by default, so the New Deal may pursue freedom and abundance and end up as a dictatorship to insure scarcity. Granted that we are "in" the war for this year and the next and perhaps for many more thereafter, the temptations of Big Government to become a permanent part of the U. S. productive machine will be many. Plants are being built with government money; they may be retained by the government when the war is over to compete with privately owned plants next door or just across the tracks. The Department of Agriculture is assuming the right to "save the farmer by tomato juice"—that is, to compel him by administrative fiat to get out of wheat, cotton and other albatross staples and into diversified vegetables destined for Britain. When the crisis is over, government farm "spotters" may have taken on the characteristics of an Ogpu, and the power of Big Government to control a man's planting beyond the needs of soil conservation may be saddled upon us forever. War-time price fixing, too, may become a permanent

part of the economic landscape, and the economy as a whole may take on the continued coloration of a corporatism that is as old as the medieval guilds, the "just" price and the Elizabethan wage laws and as new as the Fascist State. But if we are wary none of these things need happen. As I understand Mr. Leon Henderson, he wants price controls *now* so that the economy will not be subjected to a grinding post-war deflation, with its train of evils. The thing to do is to watch Mr. Henderson lest his motives change with the pleasures of exercising power.

We have learned a lot since 1918; the thing to do is to apply our knowledge. The war can be financed out of taxation and forced savings, with price controls assuring the army and navy a steady flow of *matériel* at reasonable cost to the people. But what will happen afterwards? That depends on the will of thousands of individuals. At the moment I am hopeful. In Bridgeport, Connecticut, for example, there is a war boom that is accompanied by a collective will to save: Bridgeport labor, as I write, is paying up old debts, buying durable goods—refrigerators, automobiles, washing machines—on a short-term installment plan or for cash, and putting money away in the bank to cushion the shock of eventual change-over. Bridgeport Chamber of Commerce officials were bemoaning the excess plant which the war was calling into existence, but no local manufacturer of any consequence was particularly menaced by debt tokens issued to get funds for that plant, for the government was doing most of the financing, which should be written off out of taxes before the war is ended. True, the

extra factories will exist no matter who pays the bills for them. But it is doubtful that there can be any such thing as abstract over-building of plants; it is the debt behind it that is important. In Bridgeport after the last war the Bullard Company, makers of machine tools, kept their new plant and sold their old factory to a company which makes computing machines, for which there was a vastly increased market in the Twenties. The government can learn from such examples: if, after the war is over, it will carefully release excess manufacturing capacity to private capitalists who have new *types* of goods to make and market at low prices, a nation of 130,000,000 should be able to absorb almost any number of new industrial sites. The age of plastics, of light-weight alloys, of an *ersatz* that promises to cut out the expense of inter-continental cross-hauling of cumbersome materials, is just dawning; and the war itself should give the men in the laboratories a vast impetus that may carry over into the coming peace.

Of late years the "economic interpretation" of history has had little use for the will of man: progress has been defined for all practical purposes as the reflex of hit-or-miss changes in the mode and relationships of production. Simply because the "old" middle class of small proprietors has been shrinking in relation to the "new" middle class of clerks, service trade employees and industrial technicians, Lewis Corey and others have deduced the end of middle class society as we have known it. If Corey is right, then the old democracy—or the old republicanism—is dead; instead of standing on their own productive feet *outside the orbit of the State*, the "de-

termining number" of people will come to depend on big organizations which, in turn, will be subjected to the participating rule of the State so far as wages, hours, deductible social service payments and shop conditions are concerned. State capitalism—or State socialism—will give color and contour to all our lives. But I can't see this *necessarily* happening in the United States. The areas of individual or family freedom are still too many: small machine shop owners in the Naugatuck Valley, potato growers in Aroostook County, Amish farmers in Pennsylvania's Lancaster County, teachers in private schools and universities, the 2,100,000 business units in the U. S. which have assets of less than \$250,000 each—these are not the soil in which State capitalism can get a flourishing start. Besides, the evidence of my eyesight causes me to distrust Mr. Corey's class statistics. Look at my friend, Mr. I—, who lives down the road from me. Mr. I— is a technician in a Waterbury brass mill—which makes him, in Corey's definition, a member of the "new" middle class whose presumptive desire is State capitalism. Yet Mr. I— is a goat-breeder and chicken-farmer and carpenter by avocation, and he very definitely feels himself a member of the "old" middle class. If some foundation would multiply the Mr. I—'s of America and add them definitely to the old-style shop keeper, small factory owner, farmer and lobster fisherman, my guess is that Mr. Corey's statistics would shuffle into a different psychological pattern.

In any event, a pluralistic society based on a widely diffused small ownership still has a chance in the U. S. I am on the mailing list of the Co-operative League

News Service; almost every week I get a bulletin telling of some new co-operative triumph such as the entry of the North Kansas City, Mo., Consumers Co-operative Association into the production of crude oil. The business that is done by consumers co-operatives in the U. S. does not bulk large percentage-wise; but it has a definitely ponderable effect on the price level of many things such as fertilizer, tractor oil, binder twine and so on. These "hidden" controls often spell the difference between sticky prices and the free market atmosphere that still makes for free men. As Hilaire Belloc says, only a "determining number" of people need make their livings outside the orbit of Big Business, on the one hand, and the orbit of the paternalistic Big State, on the other, to preserve the air of freedom for everybody. As long as the few natural anarchists have liberty to shop around for bosses or to quit unlikely jobs to take flyers on their own, society can rock along without worrying about the dynamite inherent in the frustration of free souls.

Because of the number of Americans whose lives are dominated neither by the Du Ponts nor by the machinery of WPA, I doubt that Mr. Burnham's "managers" will reduce the Senate or the House of Representatives to ciphers even after the strains of total war. On the other hand, I can't see the U. S. returning to the sacred all-out individualism of our fathers. A certain minimum of social security—old-age pensions, unemployment relief—is here to stay. The compulsory "security" of a year or so of life in an enlarged army and navy is likely to be the lot of a few million young men

in an era of changing boundaries and shrinking oceans. Sooner or later a working balance between the various types of social security will be reached, with State pensioning and care sharing the picture with private insurance and hospitalization groups. And when the experimentalism of the New Deal is thoroughly shaken down, the book-keeping of government industrial enterprise will no longer weight the competitive chances against private industry by concealing certain items that must go into costs. As for private monopoly, I still see much virtue in a proposal made by Ben Cohen some time ago: that the excess profits of industries which do more than a certain percentage of the business in their field be taxed more steeply than the profits of less voracious units. This would put a damper on the urge to trustify; and it should guarantee the presence of a competitive Henry Ford or a maverick Ernest Weir in fields which are now monopolized by a Big One or a Big Two. Wherever possible, taxation policies should be framed to bear lightly on small enterprise and on new enterprise if Hilaire Belloc's "determining number" of free citizens is to be kept around.

Most commentators with a democratic bias persist in saying that internal freedom is impossible even in continental North America without external freedom in the world at large. Certainly it is easier to maintain freedom at home if the atmosphere is generally "easy" abroad. Nevertheless, I think the old-style international Manchesterians overdo their pessimism about the prospects for a pluralistic America in a world that may see continental Europe committed to repression for a gen-

eration. In hoping and pressing for too much internationally, the old-style Manchesterian is likely to commit the U. S. to years of strain that will be hard on internal pluralism. I say this with no desire to prejudice such unexceptionable policies as Aid to Britain and China and the fortification of outlying bases, which are sensible policies even from an isolationist point of view. And I realize that the cost of maintaining the armaments necessary in a non-Manchesterian world is apt to be way beyond the calculations of pre-1939 Americans.

Before trying to guess at the international prospects for, say, 1960, one must come to grips with five posers. These may be summed up under (1) the changing technology of killing-machines, (2) the unequal division of the world's raw material wealth relative to population pressures, (3) trade conflicts engendered by the clashing human desires for cheapness on the one hand and national security on the other, (4) the fatal flaws in League of Nations principles that were made plain in Alexander Hamilton's Paper Fifteen of "The Federalist" long before Clarence Streit began extolling the virtues of Unionism as against the shortcomings of Geneva, and (5) the problem of Russia, which poses at an extreme the rather general difficulties inherent in international cultural differentiation.

The first poser brings us up smack against the difficulties of imposing a single order on the world in the era of the bombing plane. When the costly battleship could control the rich river mouths and the narrow seas, it was possible for a wealthy England to achieve the stabilization symbolized by the universal validity of the

bill of sale drawn on London. But the lesson of the early Twentieth Century tells us that the technological hegemony of the battleship, while still important to the defense of islands, isolated continents and deep-water trade routes, has in certain reaches passed to the fighter-protected bombing plane. With the coastal reaches controlled from landing fields to the rear, the world may shake down willy nilly into the three great regional power units envisaged by James Burnham, with Europe, North America and East Asia struggling for the control of the southern islands, India, the country below the Amazon Valley, and South Africa. This prediction does, of course, grant the disappearance of Britain's maritime empire, which would presumably be assimilated to the United States on the one hand, and to the European and Asiatic power units on the other. But history never develops as cleanly as the Burnhams suppose: if technology were the sole determining factor Europe would have become unified with the development of the modern railroad. If Britain maintains the will to kick against such "logic," there is no reason why, with the manufacturing aid of the U. S., she cannot achieve her own sufficient modicum of air power dominant over her own coasts, river mouths and narrow seas; and dominant, too, over her North African and Near Eastern spheres of interest. In which case, the Nazis will be stalemated. Similarly, the Japanese can be stalemated on other shores by the Chinese and the Anglo-Saxons if the planes are forthcoming. All of this does not necessarily imply the total defeat of either Germany or Japan. Personally, I look to see the wars on two sides



of the earth end in stand-offs or extremely limited victories, with the cost of distant invasions preventing any clear-cut decisions anywhere. This is not a popular view at the moment, but if anyone will take the trouble to work out the arithmetic of invasion (army organization tables and available shipping tonnages can be obtained for a little trouble) he will be sobered by the realization that force is applied with almost insuperable difficulty over great distances—provided, of course, that the objectives are defended and the lines of advance continually harassed.

Poser number two brings us up against the will of the rich regions to share with the poor. Even after Hitler goes, Europe is bound to be troubled by the demands of the "Populist" east—the Balkans, Ruthenia, Poland—for more capital than it can absorb at a profit to the lender. This must produce a sense of galling insufficiency not unlike the sense of grievance that swept prairie America in the days of Bryan and the elder La Follette. In the U. S. the grievance was overcome by taxing the East for farm-parity payments, for building the big western dams, and for tying down the soil in the dust-bowl regions. But if we are to assume a single political unit in Europe with the power to tax the Rhine and Seine and Meuse valleys for rural relief in Bulgaria, what becomes of England? Can she live forever free off the coast of a unified Europe? The economic needs of Europe for political unification and the spiritual needs of Englishmen for freedom must remain polar antagonists until such time as human beings cease to be tempted by the playthings of power. There

remains the chance that some day Europe may be divided into a western federation and a Slav-Hungarian federation, with Britain's maritime empire and Russia holding them in balance from the periphery. But this balance demands a Russia that will not seek to impose the revolutionary aims of the Third Internationale upon the rest of the world—which brings us to poser number five. At the moment it looks as though Communism was about to be liquidated in Russia by German Fascism, which is scarcely an improvement.

Even assuming the problem of Europe can be solved, the world as a whole must bicker and stew internationally as it has done for centuries. The industrial development of East Asia will be limited by the paucity of good coking coal; and in Brazil, the local exploitation of the rich Minas Geraes iron deposits will lag for the same reason. The tropics in general will never be as desirable for habitation as the temperate zones. Eradication of scourges will proceed, but the improvement of the quality of life between the Tropics of Cancer and Capricorn will be limited by the refusal of temperate regions to put up more cash than is necessary for political-strategic reasons such as clearing up the approaches to the Panama Canal or keeping the Germans out of Brazil. Indeed, the unwillingness of the fortunate regions to shell out more than a minimum for the hot and sandy countries should prove the prime bar to the World Federation which idealists of the Rosika Schwimmer type demand. In a federation the power to tax belongs to the majority as represented in the federal Congress; the correlative power to spend is likewise

the prerogative of the multitude. Quite obviously, the fortunate temperate regions are not going to permit tax-and-spend raids on their substance by the majority-millions of the tropics. The federal principle may advance in the latter part of the Twentieth Century, but surely it will be a regional federation, or Anglo-Saxon federation, or pan-Slavic federation, as against the more grandiose vision of the World State.

Poser number three is tied up with poser number two, for trade is a two-way or triangular proposition, and the poor region can't get free gifts from the rich beyond a certain point. So far as the future of the U. S. as an overseas trading power goes, it is necessarily limited by the continental scope and vast variety of the home market, which is great enough to demand ninety percent of the efforts of those who man the industrial machine today. Our exports are hitched to our imports, and it is hard for the U. S. to absorb more than a few billion dollars' worth of rubber, tin, manganese, tung oil, bananas, coffee, tea, sugar and specialty products each year. And day by day the chemists continue their assaults on the costs of oceanic cross-hauling: there is little sense in paying freight on nitrates from Chile when they can be gotten from the air at home; and when nylon has captured the silk market by State Department fiat the Japanese will have a hard time crowding back in on the Du Ponts from a position of 6,000 miles away from the customer. There will be plenty of international trade in the future, but poor nations will be constrained to defend their price levels, which means irksome trade controls to prevent unfavorable year-end

balances. The U. S., which is rich and technologically proficient, should try to make it easier for other nations to sell their specialties in its home market, but even if Cordell Hull lives long enough to abolish all tariffs it will not mean the emergence of an internationalist Utopia. For what has Poland, for example, to give us besides a few Polish hams? What can Brazil send to us in bulk besides coffee? What has China that we can take beyond its tea, tung oil and tungsten? The "menace" of cheap labor "flooding" us with manufactured articles seems to me to be non-existent: generally speaking, our mass production is, as Bernie Baruch says, too good to be done in by any amount of European or Asiatic slave labor. When the Japanese made a "menacing" cheap light bulb, General Electric and Westinghouse countered by developing machines more capable than the cheapest Asiatic fingers, and so kept the U. S. market. If and when the Germans can make the equivalent of a Chevrolet and sell it in the U. S. below the Detroit price, I will begin to worry.

As for a League of Nations, I expect it to be tried again some time. I expect to see it work for a period—but no better than the systems of Metternich and Bismarck also worked for a few decades. A League is only as good as the mutual consent of the strongest members—and if the strong members divide evenly over an issue they can fall to fighting within a League as easily as under the old open balance-of-power dispensation. Alexander Hamilton made that so plain in "The Federalist" that I was not surprised in the least by the failure of the League in the Thirties. History in the

Twentieth Century has shown us that when ill will rises to a certain pitch neither a League of Nations nor a balance of power can secure the peace.

Will it be "union now," instead? I doubt it, for a union of the U. S. and Britain might mean that Gerald Nye's wheat farmer constituency would have to assume responsibility for headaches in the Kabul Pass and in Tanganyika. Maybe Mr. Nye's constituency should be more world-minded, but how can people in the mass react in time to dangers which they cannot absorb into their every-day emotions? It is no accident that our ex-foreign correspondents who have learned to think of Vienna as home are the most warlike among us. The ex-foreign correspondents may be right, but no nation can consist of Dorothy Thompsons and Vincent Sheeans and get the Monday morning washing done.

When peace comes, we should refrain from asking for Utopia on a world scale just as we must refrain from asking it at home. A disillusioned wisdom would tell us to subscribe to the axiom that "propinquity breeds primary responsibility"—and with this in mind we would cut our foreign policy to the Monroe Doctrine plus *limited* commitments to provide Britain with arms if anyone disturbs the peace of Europe, and China with arms if anyone tries to run amok in Asia. Too much meddling, too much righteousness, can only raise up hate against us in the long run. We must remember that the question, "Am I my brother's keeper?", does not admit of a categorical answer. The assumption that you have the right to look after your brother may denote a noble spirit; it may also entail an intolerable de-

gree of the busy-body. Many brothers don't want to be kept; they want to live and let-live. As a matter of fact, Cain's sin was the precise opposite of that implied in his contemptuous question: actually, he had assumed the total right to dispose of his brother as he saw fit, even to the extent of killing him.

But such reasoning may be interpreted as Chester-tonian sophistry. All I am trying to say is, "Let's not expect the future to differ markedly from the past." Fight to contain Hitler, yes, fight until the zeal has gone out of Nazism and a great weariness fills even the Germans of the High Command. But then remember that it is a tolerable society for which we are hungering, and that toleration precludes a demand for the perfectionism that must close its mind to the other fellow's equal and opposite idea of Heaven on Earth. This sounds like conservatism, but actual application of such a spirit would be revolutionary in a world that is tired of the total zeals of the Left and of the Right.

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## The Contributors

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